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Eritrea wants probe into island dispute

CAIRO (AFP) — Eritrea wants an independent commission to decide who bears responsibility for its conflict with Yemen in December over the disputed Hanish archipelago in the Red Sea, President Issaias Afeworki has said. Eritrea "will make a forceful call for the creation of an independent committee to investigate which party began the conflict," Mr. Issaias told the international Arabic daily Al Hayat in an interview published Monday. The two countries fought for control of Hanish Al Kabir, the main island in the strategic archipelago dominating shipping lanes at the southern end of the Red Sea, between Dec. 15 and 18, when Eritrea defeated Yemeni forces. The battle claimed nine lives. The Asmara and Sanaa governments each accuse the other of starting the conflict and both have agreed in principle to the demilitarisation of the archipelago.

Israel launches projects in S. Lebanon

MARJAYOUN (AFP) — Israeli Agriculture Minister Yaakov Tzur on Monday voiced his country's continued support for its allies in the occupied "security zone" in South Lebanon as he inaugurated Israeli-financed projects here. Mr. Tzur was speaking at a press conference on the Lebanon-Israel border after a brief visit to the "security zone" manned jointly by around 1,000 Israeli troops and a 3,000-strong proxy militia, the South Lebanese Army (SLA). "We will continue to give support to this region and provide it with its basic needs," said Mr. Tzur, flanked by SLA commander Antoine Lahd, after inaugurating a chicken farm and a greenhouse. Israel, which has invested huge sums of money into the zone over the years and keeps on its payroll a civilian administration, financed the Lebanese-owned projects which experts have estimated at around $100,000. "We must be ready economically and militarily for peace," Mr. Tzur said, adding that when the time comes Israel will have to negotiate with the Lebanese authorities on the future of Israeli-financed projects in the "security zone."

Israel could free murder convicts

OCCUPIED JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israeli Justice Minister David Libai said Monday that Palestinian prisoners with blood on their hands could be released if attacks on Israelis are halted. "If the Palestinian (National) Authority keeps up its fight against terrorism and views terrorism as an obstacle to our bilateral relations, we will be able to discuss these releases," said Mr. Libai. The condition was that the attacks had to stop. "And if we release Palestinians who murdered Jews, we plan to do the same for Jews who murdered Palestinians or who carried out crimes for nationalist motives," he said. Mr. Libai also said after talks with his Palestinian counterpart Freih Abu Middein, at the Erez crossing between Israel and Gaza, that his country was keeping its word on the planned release of prisoners. Some 4,000 Palestinians are still in Israeli jail.

Abu Sharif to end 30-year exile

AMMAN (AFP) — A leading Palestinian figure, Bassam Abu Sharif, said he would return to the Gaza Strip on Tuesday for the first time in almost 30 years with the approval of Israeli authorities. Mr. Abu Sharif told AFP on Monday that he would travel to the Gaza Strip for the first time since 1967 to take part in meetings of the Palestinian National Council (PNC). Israel has agreed to allow the return of all the 630 PNC members to hold a meeting to annul clauses in the Palestinian charter calling for the destruction of the Jewish state. Mr. Abu Sharif, who has lived in Jordan for two years, said "the abolition of the passages in the charter calling for the destruction of Israel is necessary as they no longer have any sense following the signature of the autonomy accords."

Turkey pledges to punish hijackers

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Tansu Ciller said Monday that pro-Chechen gunmen who hijacked a ferry with more than 200 people on board in a Turkish port last week would be brought to justice. "We have proved that we will not be intimidated by terrorism," Ms. Ciller said in a message to Russian Prime Minister Viktor Chernomyrdin, according to her office. She was referring to the peaceful outcome of the crisis Friday when the hijackers surrendered to Turkish security forces in Istanbul. "They (the hijackers) will be punished according to the Turkish laws," Ms. Ciller added.

Israeli minister visits Vietnam

HANOI (AFP) — Israeli Finance Minister Abraham Shohat arrived in Hanoi on Monday to discuss economic links with Vietnam on the first visit here by a cabinet level Israeli official. Mr. Shohat went straight into talks with his host, Finance Ministry Ho Te, and then met with Mai Liem Truc, the head of Vietnam's state-owned telecommunications company. Vietnam and Israel only established diplomatic relations in 1993 when Hanoi implemented a policy of broadening its ties in the Middle East. Vietnam maintains close links with the Palestine Liberation Organisation as well as Iraq, Iran and Sudan. Since 1993, Hanoi and Tel Aviv have expanded economic and educational links with Israel sharing its expertise in agriculture and irrigation.

Leading ideologist of Israeli right dies

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel Eldad, an underground extremist leader and for 50 years one of the most influential figures of the Israeli right wing, died on Monday, his family said.

Arafat firmly in control; independence predicted in three-year council life

Elections declared a success despite delays and reversal of some results

Combined agency dispatches

YASSER ARAFAT held a secure grip on power Monday after being overwhelmingly elected Palestinian president and a senior Arafat aide said he believed a Palestinian state could be set up before the end of the three-year term of the newly elected self-rule council.

But Mr. Arafat's historic victory was marred by repeated delays in final results for a self-rule council.

Preliminary results indicated members and supporters of Mr. Arafat's Fateh movement had won about three-quarters of the 88-member legislature.

But the release of final results, originally to have taken place early Sunday then delayed repeatedly and not expected until late Monday night, cast a shadow over the polls.

Mr. Arafat, 67, himself cruised to an easy victory, winning 88 per cent of the vote against the nine per cent of sole challenger Samiha Khalil, a grandmother and left-wing activist.

"We have to have all the lists from all the districts finalised before we can release the final results," said Central Election Commission (CEC) spokeswoman Daniela Khalaf from CEC headquarters in the West Bank town of Ramallah amid growing complaints.

She said problems had arisen with vote counting in several areas of the Gaza Strip and main West Bank towns like Nablus and Hebron.

"We will not be able to release the final results before this evening," she said, being cautious this time not to give a specific hour.

Some of the 700 candidates

(Continued on page 7)

Jordan pledges its continued backing for the Palestinians

AMMAN (J.T.) — Jordan on Monday welcomed the outcome of Saturday's Palestinian elections in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and voiced support for the Palestinian National Authority (PNA).

His Majesty King Hussein has congratulated Yasser Arafat on his landslide victory as president in the self-rule authority, praising his lifelong struggle for Palestinian rights.

"I received with joy your victory in the honourable balloting, deemed by everybody as honest," the Jordan News Agency, Petra, quoted King Hussein as saying in a cable sent to Mr. Arafat late Sunday.

"The Palestinian people have struggled over the past decades, and you (Arafat) were in the vanguard of its freedom fighters in a bid to attain Palestinian rights on their national soil," the King added.

"Today you reap the fruits of this struggle and embody through these elections the will of the dear Palestinian people and their aspirations to having freedom and democratic life which fit their struggle and sacrifices," King Hussein said.

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Fateh candidate Mufid Abed Rabbo is cheered by supporters in the Tulkarm refugee camp after his victory in Saturday's elections (AFP photo)

Jordan to reduce by half its exports-for-oil to Iraq

Move has no political bearing – source

By P.V. Vivekanand
Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordanian exports to Iraq in return for oil will be halved to $200 million in fiscal 1996 because of the nearly $1.2 billion in accumulated Iraqi debts to the Kingdom, official sources said Monday.

The sources confirmed a Reuter report that Jordan and Iraq had reached an agreement to this effect during a meeting between the ministers of trade of the two countries when they met last week to discuss the annual bilateral trade accord.

The decision would not affect exports to Iraq in return for cash, but such deals are rare these days, businessmen say.

The Kingdom gets about 50,000 barrels of crude and 20,000 to 25,000 barrels of fuel oil from Iraq every day in part settlement of Baghdad's debts to Amman. That represents all of the Kingdom's daily needs of crude and fuel oil.

The sources stressed that the decision had no political bearings and was based on a consideration of the mounting Iraqi debts to Jordan estimated at nearly $1,200 million.

The debts were accumulated during the 1980-88 Iran-Iraq war and since then as a result of Iraqi inability to pay cash for its imports following the imposition of sweeping international trade sanctions against that country after its August 1990 invasion of Kuwait.

The oil exports to Jordan are exempt from the sanctions since no cash changes

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Jordan to get up to $300m in IMF credits in 1996-98

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — Jordan stands to receive up to $300 million in credit from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) between 1996 and 1998 to strengthen the Kingdom's balance of payments and foreign exchange reserves.

In return for the credit, Jordan is expected to consolidate its economic reform programme with particular focus on government finances and the Kingdom's trade system. No immediate steps are envisaged in terms of raising tariffs or taxes under the programme.

Mohammad Al Erian, acting director of the IMF Middle Eastern Department, said the Jordanian request for the credit of 200.8 million special drawing rights (equivalent to about $300 million) accompanied a memorandum of understanding on economic structural reforms that was agreed between the Kingdom and IMF for the same period.

The memorandum, effectively a programme of "macroeconomic adjustment and structural reforms for 1996-98," and the request for credit under the IMF's extended fund facility (EFF) are to be submitted to the IMF's executive board in early February. Mr. Erian said in a statement to the Jordan Times.

Jordan has received about $180 million under the same category of IMF credits, usually made available only to countries with a good track record of implementing IMF-recommended reforms. The new credit applies to the next three-year period.

Jordan repaid part of the EFF credit to the IMF with a $135 million soft-term loan from the government of Japan in October last year.

The IMF move to present Jordan's programme and request for credit to the executive board indicated that the world body was satisfied with the reforms undertaken by the Kingdom and with the foreign exchange reserves it managed to build up by the end of 1995.

Under an IMF stipulation in 1995, Jordan undertook to build foreign exchange reserves equivalent to three months' of imports — about $700 million — by the end of the year. The target was fully achieved, however.

In his statement, Mr. Erian noted that the Jordanian economy has grown at an annual rate of six per cent in the last three years and that the Kingdom had also maintained low inflation.

"The three-year economic programme of the Jordanian government that would be supported by the EFF builds on the country's recent achievements and should further strengthen its ability to benefit from the opportunities associated with regional developments," Mr. Erian said in an obvious reference to economic development plans in the wake of the breakthroughs in the Middle East peace process.

The programme would also boost the Kingdom's integration process with the European Union and the "important changes taking place in the world economy," said the IMF official referring to the

(Continued on page 7)

Israel, Tunisia announce diplomatic relations

WASHINGTON (Agencies) — Israel and Tunisia have agreed to open "interest sections" — the lowest form of diplomatic representation — in each other, it was announced here Monday.

The decision marks the implementation of an agreement in principle reached in October 1994 but held up because Tunis did not previously agree to an exact opening date.

The announcement was made by U.S. Secretary of State Warren Christopher during a joint press conference with Israeli Foreign Minister Ehud Barak and his Tunisian counterpart Habib Ben Yahia.

"I am pleased to announce that for the first time Israel and Tunisia will establish official facilities, called interest groups, in each other's countries," Mr. Christopher announced after the talks.

"By the 15th of April of this year, each nation will host representatives of the other government, so as to facilitate their political consultations and travel and trade between their two countries," he said.

Flanked by Mr. Barak and Mr. Ben Yahia, Mr. Christopher told journalists the move was "an important step to widen the circle of peace," in the Middle East.

Israel has full diplomatic relations with Egypt and Jordan. Morocco is the only Arab country with which it has an interests section arrangement.

Israel has agreed to establish such an arrangement with Mauritania at an undetermined date and also hopes for one with Oman, Israeli officials said. They said the new interest sections in Tunis and Tel Aviv would be hosted by the Belgian embassies there.

Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres said in a recent interview with the Jordan Times that there were signs that some of the Gulf states would soon establish diplomatic ties with his country. However, he declined to be specific.

Iraq wants oil deal but not in public – report

NICOSIA (AFP) — Iraq is ready to implement a U.N. oil-for-food resolution as long as it does not have to make a public statement recognising it, the weekly Middle East Economic Survey (MEES) reported Monday.

"Iraq agrees that the resolution is enforceable under Chapter VII of the U.N. Charter and is ready to implement its terms without infringing on its sovereignty and in accordance with discussions on the U.N. Secretariat," MEES quoted authoritative sources as saying.

Baghdad, however, wants to avoid having to publicly accept Resolution 986 adopted by the U.N. Security Council in April under which Iraq could sell $1 billion worth of oil every quarter to buy food and medicines.

It had previously ruled out any discussion of the resolution saying it was a threat to its sovereignty because of the tight U.N. controls which would be imposed on the oil sales.

But now it maintains that "nowhere is it specifically stated in the resolution that Baghdad must publicly declare its acceptance of it," MEES said.

The aim of proposed talks with U.N. Secretary General Boutros Ghali, for which a date and venue has not yet been set, would therefore be to reach "a pragmatic compromise which would allow Iraq to implement the resolution without changing its previous position on it."

Although Iraqi President Saddam Hussein continues to have his doubts about the resolution he has "allowed diplomats to explore ways of implementing it within narrow limits and restricted terms of reference."

News last week that Iraq had agreed to discuss the resolution with the U.N. caused the struggling Iraqi dinar to soar against the dollar as happy Iraqis fired shots of joy in the streets.

Israel to demand clear Syrian position in fresh talks in U.S.

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Prime Minister Shimon Peres wants the next round of Israeli-Syrian peace talks this week to yield some "clear answers" from Damascus concerning security guarantees, a top aide said Monday.

"Peres wants clear answers on issues like an early warning system for the Golan Heights following an eventual Israeli withdrawal or the deployment of a foreign observer force in the region," the adviser told AFP on condition of anonymity.

For the first time since Israel and Syria renewed U.S.-brokered talks in December, military experts from both sides are set to take part in the discussions when they resume Wednesday at the Wye Plantation outside Washington.

The Israeli team, headed by foreign ministry official Uri Savir, left for Washington overnight. It includes General Uzi Dayan, head of the army planning department, and Gen. Danny Yatom, Mr. Peres' top military adviser.

"The presence of these generals will allow us to resume the discussions on security arrangements," Mr. Savir said before leaving.

Mr. Savir said a top Israeli priority at the talks would be to reach a peace accord "which will allow us to benefit from reinforced security."

Mr. Peres' adviser said the government in particular felt that a pullback of Syrian troops and missile launchers to territory away from the Golan was "indispensable" to any agreement.

Israeli military sources say Syria has several hundred ground-to-ground missiles pointing at Israel, some of them armed with chemical warheads.

Israeli army radio said the upcoming talks between Israeli and Syrian military negotiators would focus on ways to prevent any surprise attacks and guarantee security along the two nations' border.

Previous talks between the Syrian and Israeli military chiefs broke down in July over Israeli demands to leave an early warning system on the Golan under the terms of any withdrawal agreement.

Damascus insists on a total withdrawal of all Israeli forces, arguing that a ground-based early warning system would represent "a violation of Syrian sovereignty."

Two economic experts, David Brodet who heads the treasury, and Noah Kinarti, a water adviser to Mr. Peres, were also part of the Israeli delegation to the Wye Plantation.

Mr. Peres said Friday that Israel was willing to take some risks in the new talks, as its ultimate aim in reaching a settlement with Syria was to clear the way for a comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

"Listen, we have to take a chance. Those who don't dare are not realists. We are going for broke," he said.

Bahrain is 'determined' to quash internal unrest

MANAMA (Agencies) — Bahrain's foreign minister on Monday held separate talks on recent unrest with diplomats from the five permanent members of the U.N. Security Council, the official Gulf News Agency reported.

It said Sheikh Mohammad Ben Mubarak Al Khalifa told U.S., Russian, British, French and Chinese diplomats that Bahrain was determined to deal with domestic disorder and rejected outside interference in its internal affairs.

Sheikh Mohammad stated the government's "determination not to get easy with groups that work to disturb security and stability and (its rejection of any kind of foreign interference in its internal affairs," the agency reported.

The meetings followed four days of rioting and sabotage by Shiite protesters demanding jobs and the restoration of a parliament dissolved in 1975.

Around 60 people have been arrested in the past week in connection with the unrest, a government official said.

The Defence Ministry said on Saturday the 8,000-strong Bahrain Defence Force (BDF) was ready to intervene to confront "a terrorist plot," and crush security violations "once and for all." It warned that martial law might be imposed.

Newspapers in Bahrain and Kuwait have accused Shiite Iran of fomenting riots by the Shi'ite majority in Bahrain.

Iranian newspapers on Monday dismissed the accusations as an old plot to externalise Bahrain's domestic problems and justify the U.S. military presence in the Gulf.

An official Saudi newspaper blamed Iran for fomenting the unrest in Bahrain and said tension in the region would continue as long as Tehran based its policy on "terrorism."

"Terrorism and instability continue to be the only means of Iranian policy," the Nadwa daily said. It denounced "Iranian interference in Bahrain, which Tehran had once considered wrongly to be part of its territory."

"There will be no security, stability and development in the Gulf if relations between countries are not based on openness and non-interference in the internal affairs of other," it said.

Two official papers in Bahrain on Sunday publicly accused Iran for the first time of fomenting and directing the unrest.

Kuwaiti newspapers also accused Iran of the riots in Bahrain and said Tehran's alleged involvement could provoke unspecified retaliation from Gulf Arab states and their Western allies.

"Iran should stop playing with fire," Al Seyassah and its sister paper the Arab Times said in an editorial.

"Member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) will not stand by as spectators and watch Bahrain crumble under Iran's so-called religious duty," wrote Ahmad Al Jarallah, editor-in-chief of both newspapers.

Kabulis battle to survive as key supply route is blocked

KABUL (AFP) — Residents of the war-torn Afghan capital are battling for their lives after a blockade of the city's main supply route cut food and fuel supplies to the freezing and beleaguered city.

A shortage of heating fuel and basic foods — including rice, meat, flour, sugar and cooking oil — triggered by the closure has sent prices soaring over the past nine days, putting the items out of the reach of many Kabulis, aid workers and locals said.

The average 50-per cent price rise in staples has had a crushing effect on thousands of the city's war-weary residents, and in some cases the result of temperatures and malnutrition has already proved tragic.

"My two-year-old son died of cold two days ago because I could not afford enough wood to heat him or enough food to nourish him properly," petrol vendor Ghulam Nabi said, choking back tears.

"My other five children are already weak and are sure to die unless the prices drop and unless my business improves," the 29-year-old said from his deserted roadside petrol stand here.

Ghulam worked for years as a car battery charger, but business got steadily slower as Kabul's economy slumped, until it dried up completely.

He sold his last possession, a radio, a month ago to buy fuel which he began selling at the usually bustling transport station where trucks and buses heading to and from Pakistan and the east congregate.

But the latest blockade of the main eastern artery linking Kabul to the town of Jalalabad and the Pakistani city of Peshawar has left the transport hub deserted — and Ghulam and his family desperate.

"I've got no money and nothing left to sell. Prices have now gone up so much we can't afford anything but bread and tea," he said.

"We live in a house which has been badly damaged by figthing and have no windows, and there are holes in the ceiling and walls. We simply don't expect to survive," he said.

The sudden rampant inflation began after commanders from one of the country's warring factions, the Hezb-e-Islami, closed Kabul's principal supply artery amid an internal dispute, truckers and travellers said.

The row was over a proposed centralised collection of taxes levied by Hezb-e-Islami officers on the eastern supply route. Some commanders rejected the move fearing it would cut their incomes, they said.

"They are refusing to let anything pass in either direction, saying they won't open the road until their leaders allow them to collect road taxes again themselves," Ahmad Kazim said after arriving here on foot.

The effect of the latest blockage — combined with the months-long elosure of other arteries into the north and south of Kabul by the Taliban militia and other warring groups — was immediate.

Prices spiralled out of control in a city already gripped by temperatures of down to minus 20 degrees Celsius and beleaguered by severe inflation and food and fuel shortages.

The cost of mutton, a staple food, skyrocketed by 62 per cent in the first eight days of the blockade, and then all but disappeared from markets while butchers' shops have shut their doors, shoppers said.

Rice has risen by 55 per cent to $0.64 per kilo, a small fortune in a heavy rice-eati ng country where people earn an average of about $10 a month.

Aid workers here warned that any extended closure of the city's tenuous lifeline to the outside world would have a devastating effect on poor civilians already at risk from the bitter Afghan winter.

"Life has got a lot harder for Kabul civilians over the past month as the temperatures have dropped and as prices bave risen," Philippe Cartier, of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) here said.

"The worst-case scenario is a total, long-term blockade of the Peshawar road during winter, which wonld cause a serious catastrophe here.

Hansen takes over as UNRWA chief

AMMAN — Peter Hansen of Denmark has been appointed commissioner-general of the United Nations Relif and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) effective Jan. 20. He succeeds Ilter Türkmen of Turkey, who is retiring after five years as the agency's commissioner-general.

Mr. Hansen 54, comes to UNRWA from the United Nations secretariat in New York, where he has served as under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and U.N. emergency relief coordinator since March 1994. He was executive director of the Commission on Global Governance, Geneva, 1992-1994. He also served as the special representative of the secretary-general to the ad hoc liaison committee established to follow up the Washington conference in support of the Middle East peace process. In addition, Mr. Hansen has undertaken official missions to UNRWA's area of operations on a number of occasions, at the reqnest of the secretary-general.

From 1985 to 1992, Mr. Hansen was the executive director of the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations. He was assistant secretary-general for programme planning and coordination from 1978 to 1985 and also served as the secretary-general's representative to the World Food Programme and as Chairman of the Consultative Commission on Substantive Questions of the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC) during his U.N. tenure.

Mr. Hansen has, since 1978, been on leave from his professorship of international relations at Odense University, Denmark, and was previously chairman of the Department of Political Science, Arhus University. Mr. Hansen is the author of several books and numerous articles in scholarly journals.

As commissioner-general of UNRWA, Mr. Hansen heads the largest U.N. agency in terms of staff. UNRWA's 22,000 employees, almost entirely Palestinian, provide education, health, relief and social services to more than 3.2 million registered Palestine refugees living in Jordan, Lebanon, the Syrian Arab Republic, and the West Bank and the Gaza Strip — UNRWA press release.

Ciller urges her old rival Yilmaz to bury the hatchet and join coalition

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Premier Tansu Ciller called on her conservative arch-rival Mesut Yilmaz Monday to bury the hatchet and join forces to form a new government.

Turkey has been looking for an administration since elections last month which saw the pro-Islamic Welfare Party top the poll, but fall short of the overall majority it needed to form a government.

Centre-right leader Ms. Ciller has a long-standing personal row with Mr. Yilmaz. But in an interview with the newspaper Sabah she made a peace offering in order to persuade her rival to form a coalition with her and break the deadlock. "Leaving aside our difficulties, we must join hands," she said.

Her remarks came on the eve of a key meeting Tuesday with Mr. Yilmaz.

President Suleyman Demirel last Friday asked Ms. Ciller to form a new government after Welfare Party chief Necemettin Erbakan gave up the search for a coalition partner.

Both Ms. Ciller and Mr. Yilmaz, as well as two smaller left-wing parties, are against any alliances with the Welfare Party which wants to cut back Turkish ties with Europe and enforce a stricter Islamic code.

Ms. Ciller, Turkey's first female prime minister, heads the centre-right True Path Party and her rival Mr. Yilmaz the Motherland Party.

However, Mr. Yilmaz has not entirely ruled out a pact with Mr. Erbakan, saying he would consider it if Motherland failed to cooperate with Ms. Ciller's group.

The Ciller-Yilmaz feud erupted in the election with harsh accusations ranging from incompetence to corruption.

But in rare compliments in her Monday interview, Ms. Ciller said Mr. Yilmaz was a reasonable person who loved his country. "If we fail to agree, Turkey will run the risk of having a government led by the Islamists."

She said: "My True Path and Mr. Yilmaz' Motherland are sister parties."

Ms. Ciller enraged Mr. Erbakan Sunday by meeting the Motherland leader's wife, Berna Yilmaz. Mrs. Yilmaz had told the press she opposed a coalition with the Islamists. According to the newspaper Hurriyet, she even threatened to divorce her husband over the issue.

Ms. Erbakan angrily told a press conference: "Ms. Ciller is abusing Mr. Yilmaz' family affairs to promote her case."

Mr. Yilmaz has repeatedly said that Motherland would accept an alliance with True Path only if Ms. Ciller is not prime minister. Ms. Ciller tried to soothe him over this in her newspaper interview, saying: "I am not preoccupied with being prime minister. We will discuss the posts among other things."

Even if the rivals agree to form a government their parties would still have only 268 seats combined, eight short of an absolute majority of 276. Observers note that Deniz Baykal, leader of the left-leaning Republican People's Party is willing to join with Ms. Ciller.

Political observers see three options; a "Mother-Path" government; a coalition between the Motherland and the Welfare Party; or a spring election.

Constitutionally, the president can dissolve parliament and announce fresh elections if no government is formed within 45 days after a National Assembly session in which a first-round election is held for the post of speaker. Parliament held this vote last Thursday.

S.Arabia Gulf's largest drug market

DUBAI (AFP) — Drugs are flooding into Saudi Arabia despite public beheadings of those caught, as "dealers in death" risk their lives tempted by promises of rich rewards, Gulf experts told AFP.

Riyadh last week announced its largest ever seizure of heroin, but underlines its commitment to "stamp out this plague."

Police arrested Pakistanis and other Asian nationals with 24 kilogrammes of heroin with a value of $64 million smuggled in from Pakistan on board a cargo ship in December in the western port of Jeddah.

"Drug-taking is widespread in Saudi Arabia and the market remains the most prosperous in the region. That is why traffickers take the risk and chance their lives," said a Gulf anti-drug expert.

Last year a record 191 people were executed in the kingdom, most of them foreigners from Pakistan, India or Africa charged with drug-trafficking, according to official figures.

Men are beheaded with a sword in a public square, while women are killed by firing squad.

The high number of executions provoked cries of alarm from rights groups such as Amnesty International, but Riyadh dug in its heels. "We don't need a certificate of good behaviour. We will not give up the Sharia," which is rigorously applied in the kingdom, the authorities countered.

The death penalty was adopted in 1987 for those caught trafficking or for repeated drug abuse. And the authorities also offer rewards to anyone turning in a drug-trafficker.

But another expert said smuggling narcotics was "encouraged by the presence of a large community of expatriates from drug producing countries such as Pakistan, Afghanistan and Iran."

More than six million foreigners live in Saudi Arabia, the world's largest oil producer and exporter.

Some traffickers go to ingenious lengths to try to find new hiding places and bring their drugs into the Gulf. Drugs have been found in wooden beams for construction or in tinned food.

One Pakistani even sent letters steeped in heroin to his clients.

Increasing numbers of young people in Gulf Arab countries are turning to drugs, a fact which has alarmed authorities and prompted a wave of press reports condemning the sellers who they have dubbed the "dealers in death."

But there are signs that the tough measures could finally be dissuading the dealers.

There have been no announcements of any executions in Saudi Arabia since Oct. 16 last year. And the United Arab Emirates and Kuwait alarmed by the situation in Saudi Arabia have also toughened their anti-drug laws bringing in the death penalty for traffickers.

Gulf Arab military integration gains steam

DUBAI (R) — Gulf Arab states, helpless when Iraqi troops marched into Kuwait, are finally making some progress towards building an integrated defence system, according to senior Gulf military sources.

The idea of such a system for the six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states was first mooted in the 1980s but stumbled over differences of sovereignty and technicalities.

The Gulf war, launched five years ago spearheaded by Western powers, showed the military weakness of the GCC states despite their wealth from oil and spending on arms.

On the table is a plan to boost the size of a Saudi-based joint force, incorporate naval and air force units and integrate the six countries' defence systems to form a region-wide shield.

The issue was discussed at a December GCC summit and senior GCC officials say some sovereignty, technical and other differences have now been cleared.

"Now there is willingness by all parties concerned... they want to do something," said one Gulf Arab officer close to the latest talks on defence integration between Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Bahrain.

The sparsely-populated states are among the world's leading arms importers. But with much larger neighbours like Iraq and Iran, they live in a volatile area and will continue to need Western assistance for many years, said officials.

At the time of the Gulf war, all that existed of ambitious plans for a 100,000-strong GCC force was a token joint unit known as Peninsula Shield, with 7,000 men on active service and 20,000 pledged.

Now the planned force is to be 27,000 men on active duty by the year 2000, and greater standardisation of equipment and integration.

"Who would not want 30,000 troops to come and help?" said a senior officer of a new GCC spirit to hasten integration after years of opposing proposals.

Inter-GCC discussions have varied over the years from a united, single Gulf Arab army and unified arms imports to a joint response force and integrated defence systems.

"There has been a decision (by GCC leaders) to include air force and navy units (into Peninsula Shield) but this has not been activated yet," said one official.

By regional standards, Saudi Arabia and its partners have sophisticated air power but less impressive navies.

The six states, which buy weapons mainly from the United States, France and Britain, have separately spent hundreds of millions of dollars in recent years on command, control, communications (C3) and intelligence systems.

The UAE, for example, has spent about $200 million on setting up an underground C3 centre, sources said.

More deals are in the pipeline to upgrade the system to full automation and install down-links to retrieve information from airborne devices like Saudi Arabia's AWACS.

Saudi Arabia is the only GCC state to operate airborne warning and control system aircraft capable of monitoring the whole region and beyond. It is also the only GCC state with an operational, fully automatic air defence system. Its partners are upgrading to a similar capability in the next two years.

"Right now we have very good (inter-GCC air defence) communication and hope to achieve full integration as other GCC states upgrade to full automatic systems," said one planner.

GCC states will not surrender independent sovereignty to a single Saudi-based command room but the six states will be divided into eight-to-10 air defence sectors all connected with compatible hardware sharing information and able to trigger a response if one part is threatened, officials said.

There has also now been agreement on periodic alphabetical rotation of leadership of the peninsula shield among them.

But "once the force is sent to a member state in need, it automatically falls under the structure command of the host country," the senior GCC officer told Reuters.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Egyptian jailed for spying for Syria, Iraq

CAIRO (AFP) — Egyptian was sentenced on Sunday to three years at hard labour for spying for Syria and Iraq from 1978 to 1981, when the two countries had broken relations with Cairo, legal sources said. Hassan Al Banna Mohammad Heneidi, 42, had been sentenced to five years in prison for the same crime in 1981 but was in France at the time. After he returned to Egypt in 1995, he was arrested and tried before the Supreme Security Court for working with Syrian and Iraqi intelligence "in activities hostile to the ruling government," the sources said. Most Arab governments cut relations with Egypt after former President Anwar Sadat signed a peace treaty with Israel in 1979 before ties were fully restored in late 1980s.

Saudis give PLO $783,000

RIYADH (AFP) — A Saudi aid committee said Sunday it had given the Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) $783,000 in aid raised by donations and a five per cent tax on Palestinians working in the kingdom. The latest grant raises to $31 million the total aid given by the committee to the PLO since payments resumed in 1992. The Saudi government and the committee had earlier cut off all aid to the Palestinians after accusing the PLO of supporting Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in August 1990.

Two Russians killed in Cyprus crash

NICOSIA (R) — Two Russians were killed and four injured when their car plunged into a ravine in northwest Cyprus, police said on Monday. Police identified the victims of Sunday's accident as Gregory Culish, 40, who was driving, and Larissa Pavlova Pilemarcuc, 30. Four other Russians, including Pilemarcuc's son Sasha, 12, were injured and taken to Paphos hospital for treatment. A spokesman for the Russian embassy said the victims were employees of the Russian airline, Korsair, which flies between Moscow and the holiday resort of Paphos.

Turkey protests to Iran, Syria over arms

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkey said Monday it had asked Tehran and Damascus to provide urgent information about arms and ammunition seized last week in southeastern Turkey aboard six trucks travelling from Iran to Syria. Foreign Ministry spokesman Omer Akbel said that Iranian Ambassador Mohammad Bagheri and Syrian Ambassador Abdul Aziz Al Rifai were summoned to the ministry on Jan. 17 and informed of Turkey's request. Mr. Akbel told a news briefing that the trucks, whose documents showed they had been loaded in Iran and were bound for Lebanon via Syria, contained "sizeable amounts of arms and ammunition." Turkish officials said they believed the arms were bound for one of the extremist organisations based in Lebanon's Syrian-controlled Bekaa Valley.

Iran signs protocol with Armenia, Turkmenistan

TEHRAN (AFP) — Iran, Armenia and Turkmenistan have signed a protocol for three-way banking and road transport cooperation, the official Iranian news agency IRNA said Monday. The document, signed at a meeting between the three countries' foreign ministers on Sunday, calls notably for the launch of a bus service to shuttle regularly between Tehran, Yerevan and Ashkabad. The meeting here was the fourth since the three countries set up three-way cooperation in April. Trilateral commerce is to reach $30 million, according to the protocol cited by IRNA. Last year, the three concluded several accords on a barter system for the transfer of Turkmen natural gas to Iran and Armenia in exchange for goods transited through Iran. Iran and Turkmenistan agreed last year to launch three-way economic cooperation with other former Soviet republics.

Algeria's FLN quits pact with Islamists

PARIS (R) — The new leader of Algeria's former ruling National Liberation Front (FLN) has distanced the party from a political pact it signed a year ago with the Islamic Salvation Front (FIS) and other oppostion parties.

Boualem Benhamouda said the signing of the "national accord" with the outlawed FIS and five other opposition parties was one of the reasons the party sacked his predecessor Abdul Hamid Mehri as secretary-general last week.

"It was signed at a time when there was no elected president. Now that there is an elected president, the situation is different," Mr. Benhamouda told a news conference in Algiers.

He was referring to last November's presidential election won by head of state Liamine Zeroual with a large voter turnout despite threats by guerrillas and boycott calls by opposition parties.

Political sources said the FLN missed a meeting of the "national accord" signatories for the first time on Saturday at the Islamist Nahda movement headquarters in Algiers.

Reading from a statement, Mr. Benhamouda said the FLN "will participate in any dialogue which will help end the violence, free party activities from all hindrances and allow the people to elect representatives in assemblies under peaceful conditions guaranteeing free choice."

Army-backed authorities spurned the offer of the "national accord" signatories for dialogue to end the political violence which has killed up to 40,000 people in Algeria since 1992 when they scrapped general elections which FIS was poised to win.

Mr. Benhamouda, a 63-year-old former finance minister, said the FLN will hold a congress in May.

The FLN led Algeria's bloody struggle against its colonial ruler France. It ruled Algeria from independence in 1952, but lost its monopoly on power after riots in 1988 and was turned into an opposition party in 1992.

Militants assassinated 84 prayer leaders (imams) since extremist guerrillas took up arms in Algeria four years ago, Religious Affairs Minister Ahmad Merani said Monday.

Mr. Merani, himself a dissident member of the fundamentalist Islamic Salvation Front (FIS), told the newspaper Al Mujahid that several mosques had been set on fire and others looted.

He also confirmed an earlier report that founding members of the FIS had sent a letter to Algerian President Liamine Zeroual appealing for a truce in the confrontation between armed fundamentalists and the country's security forces.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION

Tel: 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO
14:00 ..... Captain Planet
14:30 ..... Jonny Quest
14:50 ..... Spirit of Adventure
15:30 ..... Scientific Eye
16:30 ..... Voyagers
17:00 ..... Ordy
17:15
Children Programme — Cupido
17:30
Serie — Les Compagnons De L'Aventure
18:00
Medical Magazine — Savoir Plus Sante
19:00 ..... Le Journal
19:15 ..... Magazine — Ushuaia
19:30 ..... News Headlines
19:35 ..... You Bet Your Life
20:00 ..... Clive Anderson
20:25 ..... Hawai Five-0
21:10 ..... 99.1 (Police Drama)
22:00 ..... News In English
22:25 I'll Take Manhattan (EP 7)
23:15
Feature Film: "Bed and Breakfast"

PRAYER TIMES

05:09 ..... Fajr
06:30 ..... (Sunrise) Duha
11:47 ..... Dhuhr
14:40 ..... 'Asr
17:04 ..... Maghreb
10:25 ..... 'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Swelfieh, Tel. 810740
Assemblies of God Church, Tel. 632785.
St. Joseph Church Tel. 624590.
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 637440.
De la Salle Church Tel. 661757
Terrasancta Church Tel: 622366
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 623541.
Anglican Church Tel. 652826.
Armenian Catholic Church Tel. 771331.
Armenian Orthodox Church Tel. 775261.
St. Ephraim Church Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 652526.
Evangelical Lutheran Church Tel: 824328.
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 845457
The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints Tel. 654932
Church of Nazarene Tel.675691.
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295.

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology.

A depression will affect the Kingdom, so it will be rainy with a chance of snow falling over areas with an altitude over 1100 metres above sea level. Skies will be cloudy to partly cloudy and winds westerly moderate to active.

In Aqaba, skies will be partly cloudy with a chance of scattered showers and winds northerly moderate with seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman 3/7
Aqaba 7/17
Deserts 2/8
Jordan Valley 6/16

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 9, Aqaba 17. Humidity readings: Amman 97 per cent, Aqaba 31 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Jum'a Abu Dhiab 758848
Dr. Awni Al Hawamdeh ... 823350
Dr. Issam Al Asmar 890504
Dr. Khaldoun Asfour 666873
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 637055
Natroukh pharmacy 623672
Al Salam pharmacy 636730
Yacoub pharmacy 644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 637660
Naitoukh pharmacy 623672
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281741
Alquds pharmacy ..... 1—)

ZARQA:
Dr. Fawwaz Hamdalluh 983644
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre 637111
Civil Defence Department 661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 630341
Civil Defence Emergency 199
Rescue Police 192, 621111, 637777
Fire Brigade 617101
Blood Bank 775121
Highway Police 843402
Traffic Police 896390
Public Security Department 630321
Hotel Complaints 605800
Price Complaints 661176
Water and Sewerage Complaints 897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 1110230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 623111
Abdali Telephone Repairs 661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 680100
Jordan Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Company 636381
RJ Flight Information 08-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 08-53200

IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 1021275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 1021272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 1021247101

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 1031314111

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
Hussein Medical Centre 813813/32
Khalidi Maternity, J. Amn 644281/6
Akileh Maternity, J. Amn. 642441/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 642362
Malhas, J. Amman 636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 607071
Shmeisani Hospital 669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Muasher Hospital 667227/9
The Islamic, Abdali 666127/37
Al-Ahli, Abdali 664164/6
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ... 777101/3
Al-Bashir, J. Ashrafieh 775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital 686100
Amal Hospital 607155
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 865199

ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital (09)983323
Zarqa National Hospital (09)980560
Ibn Sina Hospital ..... (09)986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital (09)990890

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (08)532081-5, where it should always be verified.

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

04:05 Jakartu, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)
06:00 ..... Jeddah (addi) (RJ)
07:30 ..... Damascus (RJ)
09:25 ..... Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 ..... Muscat, Dubai (RJ)
10:05 ..... Beirut (RJ)
10:15 ..... Doha, Bahrain (RJ)
16:20 ..... Cairo (RJ)
17:15 ... Chicago, Amsterdam (RJ)
10:25 ..... London, Frankfurt (RJ)
23:25 ..... Jakartu, New Delhi (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

11:15 ..... Aden, Hudaidah (DY)
14:20 ..... Rome (AZ)
14:55 ..... Munich, Aleppo (YP)
18:15 ..... Abu Dhabi (EK)
20:10 ..... Beirut (ME)
23:40 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
00:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)
01:10 ..... London (KL)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights (Terminal 1)

06:15 ..... Beirut (RJ)
08:30 Amsterdam, New York (RJ)
11:05 ..... Montreal, Toronto (RJ)
11:10 ..... Vienna, Frankfurt (RJ)
11:45 ..... Geneva, Madrid (RJ)
12:00 ..... Paris, Brussels (RJ)
12:05 ..... London (RJ)
12:15 ..... Cairo (RJ)
20:10 ..... Larnaca (RJ)
20:35 ..... Jeddah (RJ)
20:45 ..... Damascus (RJ)
21:00 ..... Abu Dhabi, Dubai (RJ)
22:05
Kuala Lumpur, Singapore (RJ)

Other Flights (Terminal 2)

06:00 ..... Damascus, Paris (AF)
07:45 ..... Beirut (ME)
12:15 ..... Hudaidah, Aden (DY)
15:20 ..... Damascus (AZ)
15:45 ..... Munich (YP)
19:15 ..... Dubai, Abu Dhabi (EK)
00:40 ..... Amsterdam (KL)
01:55 ..... Bucharest (RO)

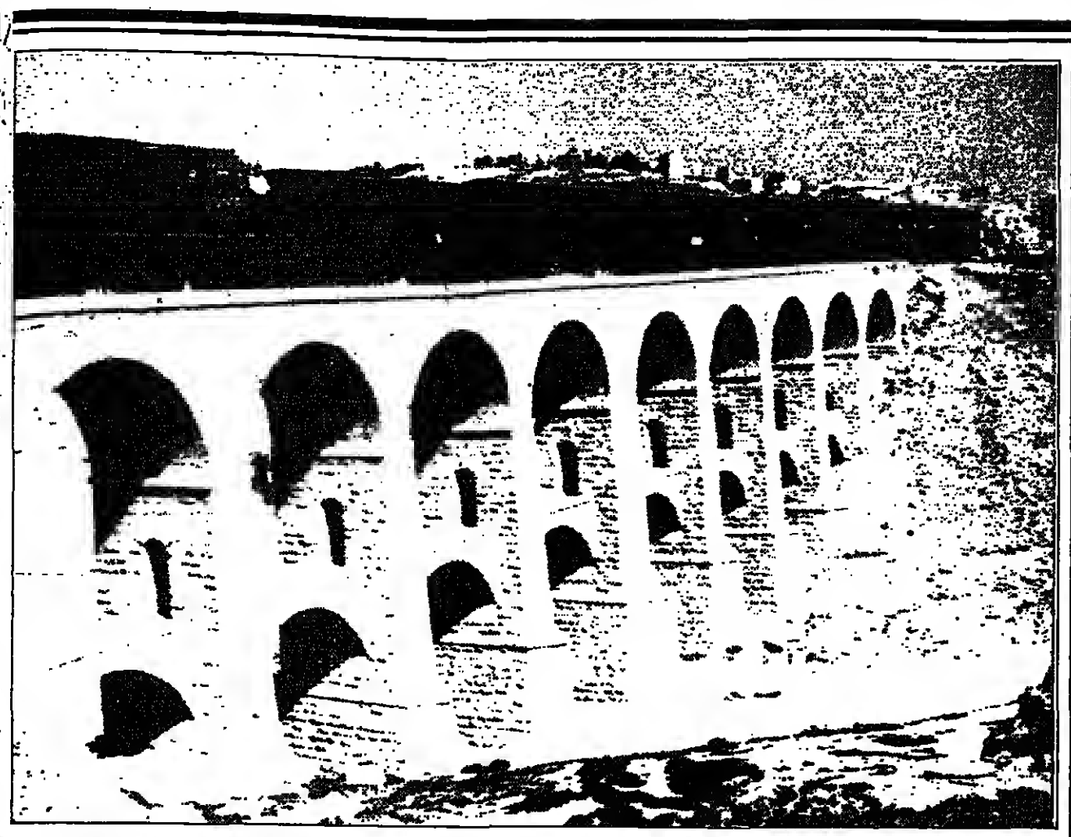
HIJAZ RAILWAY TRAIN

Dep. Amman 8:00 every Monday
Arr. Damascus
5:00 p.m. every Monday
Dep. Damascus
7:30 a.m. every Sunday
Arr. Amman
5:00 p.m. every Sunday

MARKET PRICES

Upper/lower price in fils per kg.

Apple	700/500
Banana	650/650
Banana (Mukammar)	580/580
Banana (imported)	850/700
Cabbage	80/50
Carrot	200/120
Cauliflower	160/100
Cucumbers (large)	300/150
Cucumbers (small)	480/350
Eggplant	200/120
Garlic	900/700
Grape Fruit	220/150
Lemon	350/250
Marrow (large)	80/50
Marrow (small)	190/100
Onion (green)	180/100
Onion (dry)	220/150
Orange	580/450
Pepper (hot)	500/400
Pepper (sweet)	500/400
Potato	250/180
Radish	150/80
String Beans	600/500
Spanish	150/80
Tomato	140/80



A passenger train runs along the old Hijaz railway system in eastern Amman near Wadi Rumen (file photo)

Ministry seeks financing for passenger railway project linking Amman with Zarqa and Mafraq

By Lola Keilani
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Ministry of Transportation is exploring avenues of financing a JD 50 million passenger railway project to link Amman with Zarqa and Mafraq, which, according to a study conducted by the Austrian Railway Engineering Company, is feasible.

Yahyah Shtetawy, director of the ministry's Railway Department, said financing the project will depend mainly on the private sector and international investors. If necessary, Jordan might apply for loans to finance part of the project as well, he said.

The government considers the project important because it would alleviate the pressure on other means of public transportation, Mr. Shtetawy said.

He added that the railway project could meet up to 30 per cent of public transportation needs, would create competition and force bus transportation companies to upgrade their services.

The nine-month Austrian study showed that Jordan could implement a comprehensive plan to develop its domestic passenger railway system, which in the future could link the Kingdom with neighbouring countries.

According to Mr. Shtetawy, the Amman-Mafraq railway could also branch off from Zarqa to the Iraqi border.

And the Zarqa-Irbid link could branch off to Wadi Al Urdun, and eventually link the railway to Syria, said Mr. Shtetawy.

"We would like to become a centre for transportation in the region to link the different countries," he said.

Jordan has given priority to the 124-kilometre Amman-Mafraq railway project which is divided into four parts: from Amman to Zarqa, Zarqa to Mafraq, Mafraq to Irbid, and the last stage, Irbid-Syrian border, Mr. Shtetawy said.

The project, which includes an upgrading of the narrow-gauge single track, also means eventually a Jordanian-European rail link through Turkey and Syria.

Kurt Altmann, the trade attaché at the Austrian Embassy in Amman, said the study cost the Austrian government around $500,000.

Mr. Altmann described the railway as a "sensible step" to move people in congested areas.

The Austrian company is also conducting a feasibility study to link Irbid with the Israeli rail network.

Balqa to hold by-elections for vacant House seat

SALT (J.T.) — Balqa Governorate Monday announced plans to hold by-elections in March to fill the Lower House of Parliament seat of the late Deputy Ibrahim Shihdeh who died in office on Jan. 7.

According to Balqa Governor Theeb Suleiman authorities finalised the voters lists, the assignment of 239 ballot boxes and the formation of committees to supervise the polling and vote-counting.

The governor said a total of 65,277 citizens are eligible to vote. He said 76 voting centres in different parts of the governorate will be opened for the balloting.

The voter lists included the names of eligible citizens living in Abu Obeidah and Balawneh in the Jordan Valley. These two areas were recently made part of the Balqa Governorate under a new administrative organisational plan of the Ministry of Interior.

Authorities will prepare voter cards early next week, Mr. Suleiman said. The cards will be distributed to the voters at several voting centres in about two weeks, he added.

According to the Constitution, vacancies in House seats must be filled within two months through a by-election.

According to Mr. Suleiman the by-election in Balqa will probably take place on a public holiday so that all citizens will have an opportunity to cast their ballot. May 25 is Independence Day, a national holiday.

Mr. Suleiman said Salt Comprehensive School for girls will be used a the vote-counting centre.

Deputy Shihdeh died of cancer at the age of 44.

Tawjihi scores differ little from last year, says official

Average science stream score is 60

AMMAN (J.T.) — Tawjihi scores for the first part of the comprehensive Ministry of Education high school examination were similar to those scored last year with average results in the scientific stream registering 60 per cent and the literary stream 34 per cent.

According to ministry officials Monday the exams were taken by 96,888 students.

Ministry Secretary General Izzat Jaradat was quoted on Radio Jordan as saying that the average score in the commercial stream was 33 per cent, the industrial stream 37 per cent, the agricultural stream 30 per cent, the hotel management stream 48 per cent and nursing 60 per cent.

The ten days of examinations were conducted in 1,288 halls around the Kingdom, Mr. Jaradat said.

He added that handicapped students and students who were ill, as well as eligible youth serving detention terms in juvenile delinquent centres took their examinations at the same time under special arrangements made by the Ministry of Eucation and the other concerned departments.

A total of 7,500 teachers were assigned to grade the examinations in Amman and five other governorates.

Senior students will sit for the second and final part of the tawjihi examinations in late May, Mr. Jaradat said.

NEWS IN BRIEF

Police head for Bosnia

AMMAN (Petra) — A group of police officers from the Public Security Department (PSD) Monday left Amman for Bosnia to serve with the United Nations peace keeping units. The group were seen off by PSD Director Lieutenant General Abdul Rahman Adwan, who urged the officers to shoulder their responsibilities with diligence. Lt. Gen. Adwan wished the officers success in performing their mission.

More rain expected

AMMAN (Petra) — The Department of Meteorology Monday forecast more scattered rain for Tuesday and Wednesday as a result of a cold front from Eastern Europe and a depression centered over Syria. It said scanered rains will fall in different parts of the country and snow is expected in the highlands.

Jordan, Malaysia review cultural ties

AMMAN (Petra) — Minister of Higher Education Rateb Saoud conferred Monday with Yahya Othman, a member of the Malaysian parliament, and his accompanying delegation. Discussion covered cultural cooperation and the prospect of seconding Jordanian teachers to teach Arabic at Malaysian universities.

Wadi Araba residents to get housing units

AQABA (Petra) — Tamer al Fayez, the head of a local committee overseeing the construction of housing units for residents of the Wadi Araba region, Monday announced that residents in four Wadi Araba villages will receive 84 housing units at the rate of 21 units per village. Each beneficiary will make a downpayment of JD 500 and will pay a total JD 5,000 in instalments of JD 20 a month.

WHAT'S GOING ON

PLAYS

* "Unclothing and Horse's Move" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

* "Ramadan Supermarket" (in Arabic) at the Royal Cultural Centre at 8:00 p.m.

FILM

* "El Greco" at Instituto Cervantes, Jabal Amman at 4:30 p.m.

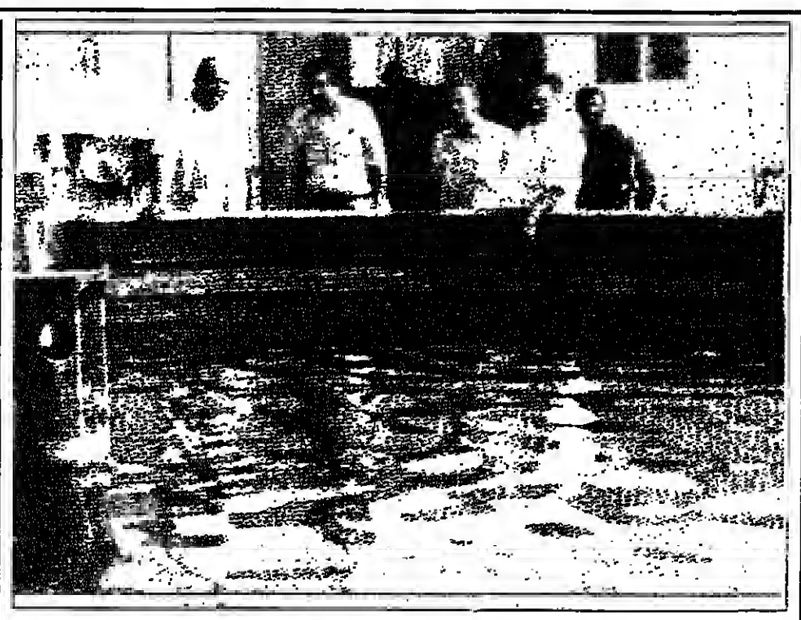
EXHIBITION

* Graphic works by Jordanian artist Yasser Dweik at Darat Al Funun, Jabal Luweibdeh (until Feb. 18)

* Contemporary and traditional jewellery at the Jordan Design and Trade Centre, Shmeisani (Tel. 699141) (until Jan. 31).

* Plastic (abstract) art exhibition by Jordanian and Iraqi artists at Orfali Art Gallery, Umm Utheina (until Feb. 6).

* Paintings by artist Raphaele Chabrol at the French Cultural Centre (until Jan. 31).



Fish-breeding pond in the Jordan Valley (file photo)

Government urges private sector to invest in fishing, fisheries projects

AMMAN (Petra) — With Jordanians consuming nearly 28 times more fi than the country produces, the Ministry of Agriculture is urging the private sector to invest in fishing and fisheries projects to meet increasing demands for this high protein staple.

According to Mohammad Abbadi, a fish industry expert at the Ministry of Agriculture said the annual average fish consumption in Jordan is 11,815 tonnes per capita that is an estimated rate of 2.9 kilos. But local fish prodcution is estimated at no more than 426 tonnes. Dr. Abbadi said.

In its drive to encourage private sector investment in this industry, he said the Ministry of Agriculture is ready to provide expertise and guidance to interested parties.

He said that because the Gulf of Aqaba is poor in fish, the ministry has been trying to encourage entrepreneurs to consider man-made ponds and lakes as other sources for supplying fish to the local markets.

Jordan started breeding fish about 30 years ago through a pilot project at Wadi Yabis Agricultural Station and subsequently several fisheries projects were established in the Jordan Valley and the Koura districts on a smaller scale, Dr. Abbadi said.

But production is still poor, he said.

According to the expert, fisheries can be integrated with land farming because fish pond waters can be used to irrigate agricultural lands planted with vegetables.

He said such water is beneficial because it contains a high rate of organic substances

He said dams, irrigation canals, including the King Abdullah Canal, and wadis are ideal for fish-breeding inside special designed fish cages.

Dr. Abbadi called for the creation of a research centre to address issues facing the fish-breeding industry, improve the quality of fish, introduce new and suitable families of fish to the Jordanian environment and thus save millions of dinars and hard currency for the national economy.

He said such a centre can be used as a training site for farmers and other investors in the fishing industry.

RSCN, Princess Basma centre to organise environmental camps

AMMAN (Petra) — The Royal Society for the Conservation of Nature (RSCN) is teaming up with the Princess Basma Centre for Community Services to hold a series of youth camps aimed at spreading environmental awareness around the country.

According to Ahmad Rousan, head of the RSCN's Public Awareness Department, the camps will orient the youth on helping to safeguard Jordan's natural habitat, protecting the environment from pollution, and contribute towards saving endangered flora and fauna from extinction.

Speaking upon the conclusion of a week of camp activities involving 60 students from Aqaba and six neighbouring villages, Mr. Rousan said the students had studied at school about ways to protect the environment but at the camp they had an opportunity to come closer to nature particularly on trips to the wildlife reserve centres in southern Jordan.

The students listened to lectures and watched slide shows about marine life, sources of pollution to marine life and coral reefs among other activities, said Mr. Rousan. He said the campers were taken on a cruise aboard an RSCN boat that is used to monitor Aqaba shores and report on vessels which dump waste into the sea.

The students also visited an ecological exhibit put on display by the Jordan Royal Ecological Diving Society and received booklets on ways to protect the environment.

Jordan hails Palestinian polls

(Continued from page 1)

"As I express the warmest congratulations in my name and on behalf of the people and government of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan through you to the Palestinian people for their great achievements on the road to regaining their rights and the independence of their will, I affirm that we in Jordan will remain supportive of its Palestinian brethren," King Hussein said.

Foreign Minister Abdul Karim Al Kabariti welcomed the outcome of the Palestinian elections, which, he said, were characterised by democracy [illegible]

"We congratulate Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on his landslide victory in the Palestinian National Authority presidency election and congratulate members of the legislative council who won in the elections, which constitute a victory for democracy and a support for the peace process in the region," Mr. Kabariti told Petra.

Mr. Kabariti said Jordan considers the election as a great achievement and a historical turning point on the road to shaping the Palestinian political identity and building institution "and to declaring independence and Palestinian sovereignty by establishing an independent Palestinian state."

Jordan, Mr. Kabariti said, will continue to support "the Palestinian brethren in their blessed march on the way to regaining their legitimate rights on their national soil."

Mr. Kabariti told Petra he will visit Gaza this week upon directives by King Hussein.

Yeltsin rival attacks handling of Chechen hostage crisis

MOSCOW (R) — Presidential hopeful and retired General Alexander Lebed said Monday that Russia's military operation to end the hostage crisis in the southern village of Pervomaiskoye was a national disgrace.

Gen. Lebed led mounting criticism of last week's assault, in which state security chief Mikhail Barsukov said 82 of an estimated 120 hostages were released and 27 Russian servicemen died. Many of the gunmen, including their leader, escaped.

"The Pervomaiskoye week, let us call it that, is the anatomy of a national disgrace," Gen. Lebed told a news conference.

Gen. Lebed ridiculed President Boris Yeltsin's comments during the crisis, in which he said the Russian forces had no option but to use force against the Chechen hostage-takers and portrayed it as a successful, well-prepared operation.

"By American standards, losing 20 per cent of the hostages in an operation is considered unsatisfactory. By Israeli standards, the loss of one hostage in an operation is considered unsatisfactory," he said, referring to other countries with experience of guerrilla attacks and hostage crises.

"It is interesting — what standards operate here?"

Gen. Lebed, who retired from the army last year, has long criticised Moscow military intervention in Chechenya, where separatist rebels are fighting for independence from Russia. He plans to run in Russia's presidential election in June.

Mr. Yeltsin, who has not said yet if he will run but is widely expected to seek re-election, is under fire from liberals and Communists alike over the handling of the Pervomaiskoye crisis.

Russian forces surrounded the village, in the Dagestan region bordering Chechenya, and bombarded it from helicopter gunships and with heavy artillery and Grad rockets. But it still took four days of siege to crush rebel resistance.

Meanwhile the Moscow-installed authorities in Chechenya said Monday they knew the whereabouts of 29 Russian workers seized last week in Grozny and had started talks with separatist rebels for their release, Interfax News Agency said.

"The workers, who had come to Chechenya from different Russian regions and were seized by the rebels, are kept somewhere near the settlement of Novogroznensky," a spokesman for the Chechen government said.

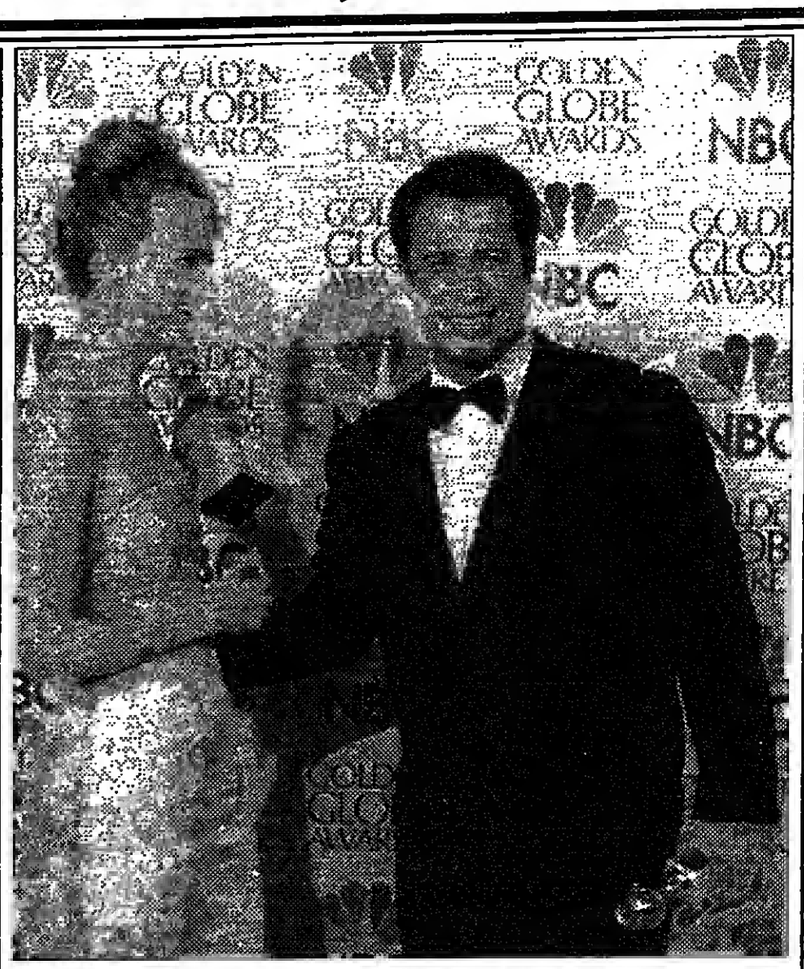
The gunmen had not set conditions for the workers' release, he added.

It was not clear whether the action was linked to the rebel operation in the Dagestan village of Pervomaiskoye.

Ruslan Martagov, spokesman for the Moscow-installed authorities, said the government had contacted rebels who controlled Novogroznensky near the eastern border of Chechenya, but no agreement had been reached so far.

The 29 energy workers were seized by unidentified gunmen at the central heating plant in the regional capital Grozny at the height of the Pervomaiskoye drama.

Another 30 Russian construction workers, seized in an unrelated incident in Grozny two months ago, are still being held by unidentified hijackers who have demanded a ransom for their release.



Actress Nicole Kidman, and actor John Travolta pose together after they won best actress and actor-motion picture comedy or musical awards at the 53rd Annual Golden Globe Awards. Kidman won for her role in To Die For and Travolta for his role in Get Shorty (Reuter photo)

Pyongyang lashes out at U.S. for using 'N. Korean threat' as pretext

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea Monday lashed out at U.S. air and naval manouvers near the peninsula, saying it showed Washington was using a non-existent North Korean threat as an excuse to dominate Asia.

The United States, the North's party newspaper Rodong Sinmun said, had announced the deployment of "a-brigade-scale forces" in South Korea, a "nuclear" exercise involving B-52 and B-1 bombers in the South, and 'Keen-Edge '96' drills with Japan's Self Defence Forces.

"Moves for military conspiracy between Japan and South Korea and between the United States and South Korea are becoming undisguised," the commentary, carried by the North's mouthpiece Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

"Although the United States is paying lip service to peace and detente in the Korean peninsula ... it is invariably seeking its design to stifle (North Korea) and is trying to dominate Asia," the newspaper said.

In a separate dispatch Rodong Sinmun said U.S. and South Korean forces had begun a large-scale anti-submarine drill in the west sea Saturday involving two submarines, nine surface ships and four anti-submarine planes.

A second joint naval exercise would be held Feb. 13, it said, adding that there had been "no ground to raise the nuclear issue" since the signing in 1994 of the agreement between Washington and Pyongyang under which the north froze its suspect nuclear weapons programme.

The 'threat from North Korea,' it said, was a 'sophism' used by the United States and South Korea "to conceal their bellicose nature and, in other words, an argument for war against the DPRK (North Korea)."

"We declare once again that if the bellicose U.S. military and the South Korean puppets unleash a war against the DPRK despite our repeated warnings, we will severely punish them a thousandfold," Rodong Sinmun concluded.

U.S. intelligence officials call North Korea's million-strong conventional army a threat to the peninsula, and say the North may have extracted enough plutonium from its nuclear programme for "one or two bombs" before the freeze.

However military observers here said last month there had been no detected indications of unusual troop movements on the North Korean side of the demilitarised zone that would indicate any higher threat than normal.

Japan snubs N. Korea's call for more rice

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's Foreign Ministry Monday snubbed North Korea's call for additional rice aid just days before an international meeting to coordinate an approach to a food crisis in the hardline Communist state.

A Japanese senator, Akiko Domoto, who returned Saturday from a week-long tour of North Korea, told a ruling coalition meeting that North Korean officials were seeking a third shipment of relief rice from Japan.

But Vice Foreign Minister Sadayuki Hayashi told a news conference later that Japan's two packages of rice aid to North Korea last year had been "of a special and exceptional nature."

"We don't have any more stockpile and we are not considering a third round of assistance," he said.

Japan agreed in October to send 200,000 tonnes of rice to North Korea on top of a 300,000-tonne batch shipped between June and September, dipping into what has left of the country's emergency rice imports following a bad crop in 1993.

Japanese government leaders have said that a third aid package should be sent only if Pyongyang gives an exact account of how it distributed the previous shipments.

At the coalition meeting, domoto quoted the North Korean side as saying that the rice aid had been "distributed nationwide as an expression of goodwill," according to coalition officials.

The new request for rice has come as Japan, the United States and South Korea prepared to hold a meeting in Hawaii Wednesday and Thursday to discuss a coordinated approach to the crisis in the North, where U.N. agencies say millions face starvation.

A team from the International Federation of Red Cross Societies was on its way to Pyongyang to discuss launching a new appeal to the international community to help ease the crisis brought on by floods in mid-1995.

Sen. Domoto, who belongs to the New Party Sakigake, the smallest of the three ruling parties, also said North Korean officials had also offered to resume long-suspended talks with Japan on normalisation of relations.

She met North Korean leaders during her stay in Pyongyang.

In twist, actress Emma Thompson wins Golden Globe for screenplay

BEVERLY HILLS (R) — Oscar winning actress Emma Thompson was given another accolade Sunday, but this time it was for writing, not acting, as she took the Golden Globe Award for best screenplay for Sense And Sensibility.

The English Victorian drama also won the Golden Globe for best dramatic picture for producer Lindsay Doran in what is seen as the major forecaster for who will win the coveted Academy Awards, Hollywood's prime honours.

Sense And Sensibility, in which Thompson also stars, had been nominated for six Golden Globe Awards, more than any other production.

Thompson, estranged from her husband, actor and director Kenneth Branagh, shrugged off her marital woes at a post-presentation press conference, saying, "it is horribly gratifying... I'm bloated with pride."

She added that she never expected the movie, which she adapted from a novel in the 1980s — "long before I became famous as an actress" — to be made.

"I thought it would just gather dust on a shelf somewhere," she said.

The Golden Globes, presented by the Hollywood Foreign Press Association in a glittering ceremony on Sunday night, are largely seen as an accurate forecast of who will take away the cherished Academy Awards or Oscars, this year's results left Hollywood in a guessing mood.

Apart from Sense And Sensibility, the rest is a mixed bag. Best director went to Mel Gibson for the mediaeval drama Braveheart, although he was not even nominated for his starring role in the film.

Emma Thompson reacts to winning the Golden Globe award Best Screenplay for "Sense and Sensibility" at the 53rd Annual Golden Globe Awards. The film also won Best Motion Picture-Drama (Reuter photo)

The best actor accolade went to Nicolas Cage for his part in the dark drama of alcoholism in Leaving Las Vegas, a low budget movie released in select art theatres which generated a cult following.

His co-star, Elizabeth Shue, while nominated, did not get the award of best dramatic actress. That went instead to Sharon Stone for her part in director Martin Scorcese's Casino.

"It's a miracle," Stone said of her victory, praising Scorcese and her co-star, Robert De Niro.

Unlike the Academy Awards, the Golden Globe Film Awards are split into two categories drama and music or comedy. In the latter category the best film award went to Babe, which beat out such critically acclaimed movies such as The American President, and Get Shorty.

But John Travolta, the star of Get Shorty, took away the Golden Globe as best actor in a musical or comedy film, lining him up for a possible Oscar.

Other winners Sunday included Nicole Kidman as best actress in a musical or comedy for To Die For, Mira Sorvino as best supporting actress in the low budget, but highly acclaimed film Mighty Aphrodite, and Brad Pitt as best supporting actor in Twelve Monkeys.

The Hollywood Foreign Press Association, which presents the Golden Globes, also honours television's best. Cybil Shepherd took best television comedy actress award for her show, Cybil, while Kelsey Grammer honed in on the male comedy award for Frasier.

Cybil took the honours for the best comedy TV series, while Party Of Five was the surprise winner of the drama TV series, beating out NYPD Blue, Murder One, ER, and Chicago Hope.

But NYPD Blue, often criticised for its language and violence, garnered Jimmy Smits, previously seen on LA Law, the Golden Globe for best actor in a dramatic TV series.

Mel Gibson shows off the Golden Globe he won for Best Director for a Motion Picture for his work in Braveheart at the 53rd Annual Golden Globe Awards (Reuter photo)

Seoul's 'Mr. Clean' joins ruling party

SEOUL (R) — A popular former prime minister hilled as South Korea's "Mr. Clean" joined President Kimyoung-Sam's ruling party Monday to provide support for Mr. Kim's anti-corruption crusade ahead of key parliamentary elections.

A presidential spokesman told reporters that Lee Hoi-Chang had agreed to help Mr. Kim's reform movement by joining the ruling New Korea Party.

Mr. Kim's anti-corruption campaign, which has already led to the arrest of two former presidents, is expected to figure high in parliamentary elections in April, where the ruling party is widely expected to face an uphill battle.

Mr. Lee quit as premier in 1994, citing disagreement with Mr. Kim's political style and the level of political power he could exercise after he was appointed in late 1993.

A lawyer by training, Mr. Lee was South Korea's youngest-ever Supreme Court judge. Analysts say he is considered one of the nation's most revered judicial officers, believed to be tough and incorruptible.

Political analysts said Mr. Lee's alliance with Mr. Kim would help the ruling party in the April elections.

The New Korea Party suffered a crushing defeat in local elections late last June, losing control of most major cities and provinces. It still holds a majority in the National Assembly.

The defeat prompted Mr. Kim to take steps to win back popularity, including speeding up reform measures, recruiting respected politicians and changing the name of his party.

Ruling party officials said they expected Mr. Lee's move to give credibility to the president's drive to wipe out corruption.

When Kim Young-Sam took office in February 1993 as the first civilian president after over 30 years of military-dominated politics, Mr. Lee was named to head the board of audit and inspection, the spearhead of Mr. Kim's campaign to root out official corruption.

Mr. Lee purged hundreds of government officials and military officers for bribery and irregularities until he was appointed premier in December 1994.

But he quit four months later after he found himself relegated to a ceremonial role while several government announcements were made without his knowledge.

"We have secured legitimacy in a series of reform works by the entry into our party of former Prime Minister Lee, who has been the torchbearer of reform," party spokesman Sohn Hak Kyu said.

Two former heads of state, ex-generals Chun Doo Hwan and Roh Tae-Woo, are under arrest on charges of amassing hundreds of millions of dollars in slush funds after rising to power through a 1979 military coup.

Their arrests are part of Mr. Kim's efforts to sever ties with his predecessors. Mr. Kim has been criticised as an "opportunist" by opposition parties and student activists for his decision in 1990 to merge his opposition group with the then ruling party, set up by Mr. Chun and Mr. Roh.

The new party, born of the merger, later nominated Mr. Kim as its candidate in the December 1992 presidential election.

Gunmen kill top Tajik Muslim leader

DUSHANBE(AFP) — Unidentified gunmen shot dead Tajikistan's top Muslim leader, the Mufti Fatkhullo Sharifzoda, his wife and other family members at their home near the capital Dushanbe, officials said here Monday.

The killing, which took place at the start of the Muslim holy month of Ramadan, was "a heinous crime aimed at destabilising Tajik society and violating all the rules of Islam," said President Emomali Rakhmonov, visiting the scene with reporters.

The Foreign Ministry said the mufti, 53, was gunned down at 1730 GMT Sunday at his home in the village of Lattakhorak, 25 kilometres southwest of Dushanbe.

The mufti's wife, 29-year-old son, daughter-in-law and one of his religious pupils also died in the shooting in the strife-torn Central Asian republic.

The mufti, appointed to his post in 1992, was a supporter of Mr. Rakhmonov's neo-Communist government and its peace initiatives, an Interior Ministry spokesman said.

Tajikistan Foreign Ministry spokesman Igor Sattarov said the attack was "a political murder, because the mufti always supported government policy on peace and stability.

"He spoke out for an open, democratic society, a civil society in which Islam only plays an educational role."

ITAR-TASS news agency quoted presidential spokesman Zafar Saidov as saying "the whole of Tajikistan is shocked by this murder."

Mr. Saidov said the murder was "unprecedented and cynical" and "a great sin" because it was commited on the first day of Ramadan. The mufti was to be buried later Monday at a small mosque in Lattakhorak.

3 Britons in 4 want Charles, Diana to divorce — poll

LONDON (AFP) — Three out of four Britons are in favour of a divorce between Prince Charles and Princess Diana, an opinion poll said Monday. Only 10 per cent of those questioned thought they should not divorce, according to the poll carried out by NOP Institute. Last month, Queen Elizabeth II called for a speedy divorce to end the stormy 14-year marriage.

Diana and sons' nanny 'at loggerheads'

LONDON (AFP) — Relations have soured between Princess Diana and the nanny appointed to look after her two sons, according to press reports Monday which said the nanny "Tiggy" Legge-Bourke had called on the princess to withdraw remarks made in private which she had found offensive. The Daily Mail quoted Ms. Legge-Bourke's lawyer Peter Carter-Ruck as saying: "I have written to Diana's solicitors Mishcon De Reya requesting that those false allegations be privately withdrawn and recognised to be totally untrue." The paper said Ms. Legge-Bourke, 30 had been particularly hurt by remarks allegedly made by Princess Diana at a Christmas party organised for the staff of the royal family on Dec. 14 at which her estranged husband Prince Charles was also present. The paper did not elaborate on what was supposedly said. Six days after the party, Ms. Legge-Bourke contacted her lawyer and at the same time asked him to warn the popular press not to publish speculative reports about her relationship with Prince Charles, the Daily Mail said. Since the Prince of Wales and Princess Diana separated in 1992, popular press has often written about Tiggy's "growing" influence over the two princes and about Princess Diana's reported resentment at the friendship between Tiggy and Prince Charles. Last year the press published a photograph of Prince Charles kissing Tiggy on the cheek after climbing a slope at Klosters ski resort.

Antonioni gets France's top award

PARIS (AFP) — France Sunday bestowed its Legion of Honour on Italian director Michelangelo Antonioni in a salute to his long career in film. Culture Minister Philippe Douste-Blazy presented the award to the 83-year-old director of Blow-Up and Identification Of A Woman, saying his films had "universal meaning". On hand for the ceremony were Vincent Perez, Wim Wenders and Irene Jacobs, with whom Antonioni has been making his latest picture.

French body shop fined for English on labels

PARIS (R) — A body sho in the alpine town o Chambery has become th first shop in France to b fined under the so-calle Toubon Law aimed a stemming the flood o "Franglais" into Frenc police said Sunday. Th beauty products shop, French branch of th British body shop chai was fined 1,000 franc ($200) by a local court f failing to translate instru tions on some its produ labels into the French la guage, a Chambery polic official told Reuters. Th Toubon Law, adopted July 1994, requires th product labels, instructio booklets, advertisemen and public signs either i in French or translated originally in another la guage. It was named aft former Culture Minist Jacques Toubon, wh drafted it and is no France's justice minister.

New Greek Socialist government sworn in

ATHENS (R) — New Greek Socialist Prime Minister Costas Simitis and his cabinet were sworn in Monday, marking a fresh start aimed at reviving the ailing economy and bringing Greece closer to the European Union (EU).

Simitis, 59, a pragmatic lawyer and economist, put together a cabinet which blends former experienced ministers and the Socialist (Pasok) Party's young guard who are committed to reform.

He kept in their posts National Economy Minister Yannos Papandoniou and Finance Minister Alexandros Papadopoulos, both credited for slashing annual inflation to a single digit for the first time since 1973.

But his choice of outspoken Theodoros Pangalos as foreign minister could rile Greece's EU partners. Mr. Pangalos insulted both Germany and Italy when he was European affairs minister during Greece's 1994 EU presidency.

The Socialist group in parliament elected Mr. Simitis as its leader last week to replace party founder Andreas Papandreon, who has been critically ill in hospital for the past two months.

Mr. Simitis' retention of the economic ministers signalled his determination to push ahead with an economic austerity programme to bring down towering public debt and move ahead with pending privatisations of public firms.

He was also expected to make changes in the boards of state firms and banks, plagued by mismanagement and growing deficits.

Mr. Simitis created a super-ministry of development, grouping industry, commerce and tourism. It was put under former European Commissioner Vasso Papandreou, a staunch supporter of him during his opposition to Mr. Papandreon's leadership over the past year.

Mr. Papandreou, (no relation to Andreas) will handle much of the distribution of EU development funds which aim to bring Greece in line with its EU partners.

Mr. Pangalos was the sole appointment likely to ruffle any feathers among Western allies and diplomatic sources said some EU countries had indicated that they would prefer someone else for foreign minister.

Fluent in French, English and German, he is one of Greece's best versed diplomats on EU affairs but is known abroad mostly for likening Germany to "a giant with bestial force and a child's brain".

He made the comment to a seminar on Greece's plans for its EU presidency in 1994 and later apologised publicly.

But Mr. Pangalos received praise for his hard work on expanding the EU to 15 members from 12 during the Greek presidency.

Defence Minister Gerassimos Arsenis and Interior Minister Akis Tsohatzopoulos who contested the party leadership with Mr. Simitis, retained their posts, giving the cabinet the appearance of a broad spectrum of the party.

Mr. Simitis held various posts since Mr. Papandreou became Greece's first Socialist prime minister in 1981 and is best known for his term as national economy minister in 1985 when EU partners say he made a serious effort to bring runaway debts under control.

He was expected to outline his government's policies in parliament this week and get a vote of confidence from the 300-seat body where Pasok has a comfortable majority.

Thousands of Rwandan refugees trapped on border

BUJUMBURA (AFP) — More than 16,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees were trapped between two military forces on conflict-torn Burundi's border with Tanzania Monday, a relief agency official told AFP.

Tanzanian soldiers were refusing to allow the refugees who fled a camp in Burundi across the Ruvubu River border, and Burundian troops behind them were refusing to allow them to retreat farther back into Burundi, said Andrei Kisselev, the head of delegation in Burundi for the Federation of International Societies of the Red Cross and Red Crescent.

Tanzania last week allowed a first wave of 15,000 refugees to cross the border — closed in March last year — after shooting broke out around their Mugano Camp, some 10 kilometres (six miles) from the frontier.

It was still unclear Monday whether soldiers of Burundi's Tutsi-dominated army fired directly into the camp, as the refugees claim, or whether the fighting took place just outside it.

The refugees said the soldiers killed 20 camp inhabitants, but relief workers have been unable to find any bodies at the camp or over the border in Tanzania and saw no evidence of shooting inside the camp.

At the weekend, the 17,000 inhabitants of the nearby Ntamba Camp decided to follow the Mugano Camp residents to Tanzania, but Dar Es Salaam closed the border again after 400 got across.

Burundian soldiers meanwhile burned down the Ntamba Camp huts, made of branches, palm fronds, mud and plastic sheeting, Hitoshi Mise, the senior representative of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) told AFP.

He said the troops refused to allow UNHCR field staff to visit the Ntamba refugees on the Burundian side of the border Sunday, but that some were going there Monday with Burundian Interior Minister Gabriel Sinarinzi.

Mr. Mise said he had no idea how much food and water the refugees had taken with them, but that the UNHCR was standing by to supply food, water and blankets once burundian authorities gave their permission.

Mr. Mise told AFP Monday that he had told the central government the refugees should be allowed to return to Ntamba, which could be rebuilt, or another camp.

"Nobody said 'no,'" he said. "A decision should be made after the interior minister's visit."

The other solution would be to repatriate the refugees to Rwanda, Mr. Mise said, but acknowledged that it was unlikely they would want to return.

They fled that neighbouring country at the end of a vicious three-month civil war in 1994 in which Hutu extremists slaughtered more than 500,000 men, women and children before being defeated by a rebel army of minority Tutsis.

In Burundi, where the ethnic mix is similar to that before the Rwandan genocide — 85 per cent Hutu to 14 per cent Tutsi — they are enmeshed in a low-level civil war.

Clashes between the army and Hutu militias, as well as massacres of villagers, are resulting in a daily death toll put at around 30, and the 120,000 Rwandan Hutu refugees in the north are frequently caught in clashes.

The army accuses Burundi's Hutus of collaborating with Rwandan Hutu refugees in Zaire to mount guerrilla attacks across the border, and the Rwandan Hutus here say the army is trying to force them out.

The army has also threatened to move the refugee camps deeper into Burundi, which the refugees fear would be dangerous, relief workers say.

Mr. Mise described the burning of the Ntamba Camp as "probably the result of miscommunication" between local and central authorities, who were apparently intially unaware of it.

Britons Steve Nicholson (right) and Caroline Harrison, both 34, hold hands as they rest during a medical observation period at Zaenoel Abiddin Hospital in Banda Aceh. After spending ten hours in shark-infested waters Mr. Nicholson has told how he proposed to his girlfriend, Ms. Harrison, in a bid to keep them alive. The two were rescued after a ferry disaster off Indonesia's westernmost Aceh province last Friday (Reuter photo)

No more survivors in Indonesia ferry disaster

BANDA ACEH, Indonesia (R) — Rescue teams found no more survivors or bodies Monday from a sunken ferry off Sumatra and authorities said more than 100 people still missing were now presumed dead, bringing to at least 150 the death toll.

Lieutenant-Colonel Fikri, commander of the naval base on Sabang Island who is coordinating the search, said there was no longer any hope of finding any more survivors.

Col. Fikri said 51 people, including a German and another unidentified foreinger, had been confirmed dead and more than 100 were missing.

Altogether 40 people, including five foreigners, were known to have survived.

A Flotilla of military and naval vessels, as well as divers and a spotter aircraft and a helicopter, resumed the search at first light Monday but found no one from the ferry Gurita, which went down Friday night off the northern tip of Sumatra after hitting rocks in seas lashed by strong winds.

Lieutenant Basuki Praktikno, leading a seven-member team of navy scuba divers, told Reuters no more bodies had been found.

He added that the Gurita — or Octopus — had been located at a depth of 300 metres.

"Our equipment only enables us to dive to 100 metres ... Besides, it's been three days and the bodies do not float. We believe they are still trapped inside the ferry," he said.

"We are going to stop the search next Friday and by that time the bodies will already be damaged or destroyed."

The Gurita left Banda Aceh Friday night for Sabang on We Island, 18 miles to the northwest, carrying, according to its official papers, a total of 210 people. Officials said 11 foreigners were on board.

Col. Fikri said strong currents in the area were making the recovery of bodies difficult.

Exhausted foreign survivors said the vessel sank quickly about 1,800 kilometres (1,125 miles) north of Jakarta and they were forced to spend up to 18 nerve-racking hours in choppy seas.

Some survivors reported people clinging to bodies to keep afloat.

An official from the mayor's office, Safruddin, said Sunday the bodies of German Manuella Helsmit, 34, and an Irish woman, identified only as Margaret, 32, had been sent to a hospital in Banda Aceh.

The five foreigners who were rescued are Britons Steve Nicholson, 34, his partner Caroline Harrison, 24, American Margaret Crotty, 23, German Peter Bremmer, 39, and Wong Sun Tai of Taiwan.

Nicholson initially referred to Harrison as his wife, but clarified in a later interview that they were not yet married.

Mr. Safruddin said all the foreigners except Mr. Wong, who works in Banda Aceh, were tourists.

Ms. Crotty, her feet in bandages, said Sunday she swam for about 16 hours after jumping off the sinking ferry, laden with cement, building materials and two and four-wheeled vehicles.

"Passengers were screaming and shouting. There was panic everywhere when the boat was about to sink," the New Yorker, who currently lives in Jakarta, told Reuters at a Sabang hospital.

"As I was swimming, I kept bumping into others who had also escaped by jumping into the sea. Some were giving up," she said.

Mr. Bremmer, 39, who lost his wife Manuella Helsmit, was still in shock. "We lost everything we had," he said.

Nicholson, from London, told Reuters: "it (the vessel) tipped twice before finally tipping with its nose up and sank perpendicularly in a matter of less than 30 seconds."

Irian Jaya kidnappers free another local hostage

JAKARTA (R) — Rebels holding 14 people, including six Westerners, hostage in Indonesia's remote Irian Jaya highlands freed another local villager Monday, handing him over to three missionary mediators.

The mediators had flown by helicopter to the kidnapping site in the jungles of Irian Jaya province from the nearest town, Wamena, 4,000 kilometres east of Jakarta.

"The helicopter took off at 6.30 a.m. (2130 GMT Sunday) and returned to Wamena at 10.45 a.m.," Lieutenant-Colonel Maulud Hidayat, a military spokesman, told Reuters.

"The hostage named Jacobus Wandiba, whose wife and child were already freed, was released and has come back to Wamena," Col. Hidayat said by telephone from the provincial capital Jayapura.

Mr. Jacobus, a resident of Mapunduma village where 26 people were kidnapped on Jan. 8, is employed by a number of research groups as an assistant, the spokesman said. He said he believed Mr. Jacobus was in good health.

Mr. Jacobus' wife and young baby and several other hostages were released by the kidnappers on Jan. 16.

Tamil Rebels claim downing Sri Lankan army helicopter

COLOMBO (AFP) — The Tamil Tiger guerrillas Monday claimed in intercepted radio communications that they downed an air force helicopter over northern Sri Lanka together with 39 security personnel onboard, official sources here said.

Security forces monitoring internal VHF radio communications of the rebel Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) said the rebels reported the shooting down of the air force MI-17 transport helicopter over the Indian Ocean, the sources said.

"The Tigers have said in (the northern peninsula of) Jaffna that they shot down the helicopter," a defence source said, but added that they also made a similar claim two days ago when nothing was hit.

There was no official word from the LTTE about the crash. The Defence Ministry here issued a brief statement saying that the aircraft had disappeared and said a search was underway. The ministry gave no details.

Defence sources said the Russian-built MI-17 was taking troopers from the main air force base at Palaly on the northern edge of the Jaffna peninsula to a smaller military base at Vettilaikerni when it went down.

"The flight usually takes less than 10 minutes," the source said. "The pilot was not in difficulty. Otherwise he would have sent out a distress message. He just disappeared from radar."

The LTTE evidence so far suggested that the aircraft may have been shot down by a rebel anti-aircraft gunner firing from a boat off the eastern coast of the Jaffna peninsula, the sources said.

The LTTE is known to have fired medium machine guns to bring down a Chinese built Y-8 cargo plane off Jaffna in November last year, killing five crew members.

Hopes faded for the 39 people on board the MI-17 helicopter as rescue aircraft and gunboats failed to locate the wreckage five hours after launching their search in high seas infested by the Tiger naval unit, the Sea Tigers.

The crash was a double tragedy because a senior navy officer on board, Cedric Martinstyn, had lost his pilot son Jason in a similar crash in September last year. Among the other passengers were an army lieutenant colonel and a major.

The LTTE has fired surface-to-air heat-seeking anti-aircraft missiles to bring down air force planes in the past year. The LTTE fired its first missile in April 1995 to bring down an Avro HS-748 plane near the Palaly Air Base.

A total of six air force planes were lost in 1995. Defence sources said at least five of them crashed due to enemy action.

"Unlike in previous crashes, the passengers of the MI-17 were wearing life jackets," a defence source said. "If there are any survivors, we would have found them by now."

Monday's crash came nearly seven weeks after security forces captured the LTTE's main bastion of Jaffna, on the western flank of the Jaffna peninsula after nearly 50 days of fighting.

The LTTE which is fighting for an independent homeland for the island's two million Tamil minority has vowed to seek revenge for the loss of Jaffna, the capital of a de facto state run by them in the past five years.

More than 50,000 people have died in the bitter separatist conflict in the past 23 years.

Yeltsin 'will probably' stand in June polls

MOSCOW (AFP) — President Boris Yeltsin announced Monday that he would probably run for re-election in the June presidential poll but would make a definitive decision next month, Russian news agencies reported.

"I will probably agree to put myself forward for the presidential election. I say probably because I will announce my final decision on Feb. 13-15," Mr. Yeltsin was quoted as saying by Interfax.

He made the statement to a group of foreign investors.

Since last summer, Mr. Yeltsin, 64, has had two heart attacks, casting doubt on his intention to seek a further four-year term.

Following the most recent heart attack on Oct. 26, he spent two months convalescing.

In recent weeks, however, Mr. Yeltsin has been behaving increasingly like a presidential candidate, and last week he set up the Kremlin campaign headquarters, putting Deputy Prime Minister Oleg Soskovets, a key ally, in charge.

Mr. Yeltsin acknowledged he would be in for a tough contest.

"I understand very well that, if I give my consent, the struggle will be tough and neck-and-neck," the president added.

"Those I will have to face are not exactly ordinary people, but we are going to organise the campaign in line with what happens in other countries," he said.

Russia's Communist Party, which won December elections with more than 22 per cent of the vote, is expected within the next few days to name its leader Gennady Zyuganov, as a presidential candidate.

The ultra-nationalist Liberal Democratic Party of Russia, which came second in the poll with more than 11 per cent of the vote, has already named Vladimir Zhirinovsky as its candidate.

With slightly more than 10 per cent of the vote, the governing party Our Home Is Russia came third in the December poll.

According to political analysts, Mr. Yeltsin has attempted to woo the Communist and nationalist vote by ousting several reformist ministers from his government since the start of the year. The casualties have included Privatisation Minister Anatoly Chubais and Foreign Minister Andrei Kozyrev, who was popular abroad but criticised within his own country for being too pro-West.

ANC reacts cooly towards De Klerk's power-sharing ideas

JOHANNESBURG(R) — The ruling African National Congress (ANC) Monday reacted coolly to a suggestion by deputy president and National Party leader F.W. De Klerk that some form of coalition government should rule South Africa beyond 1999.

Mr. De Klerk, the country's last white head of state, told a National Party (NP) meeting at the weekend that a national unity government was in the best interests of all South Africans.

But the ANC, which heads a unity government in which the National Party is a junior partner, said in a statement in response to questions by Reuters that it did not believe in perpetuating a "forced coalition".

"The ANC acknowledges that the government of national unity has served the country well. Nonetheless to allow it to become a permanent feature can only lead to the development of an obstacle towards the very essence of multi-party democracy," it said.

Fresh general elections are due to be held by 1999, by which time a definitive post-apartheid constitution would be in force.

An interim constitution governing the transition from apartheid sets May 9, the second anniversary of the first sitting of the first all-race parliament, as the deadline for the adoption of a final blueprint for majority rule, although officials say there is little chance of meeting the target date.

Mr. De Klerk, whose party is in throes of change to make it more acceptable to the black majority, said he was not married to the concept of a government of national unity, as it was constituted at the moment, and the NP was working on possible alternatives.

"We believe that beyond 1999 there is a need to find ways and means which will ensure that the major political role players, the biggest parties, will continue to rise above their party-political differences," he said.

The ANC said while it recognised the idea of inter-party cooperation, it "does not believe in the perpetuation of a forced coalition which denies the majority political party the right to freely decide how to pursue the interests of the majority."

The National Party, which created and four decades later dismantled apartheid, said last week it was considering how best it could draw in ANC dissidents, the Zulu-based Inkatha Freedom Party and other like-minded groups into an umbrella party to counter the ANC.

The ANC holds 252 parliamentary seats compared to 82 held by the country's white former rulers and 43 by Inkatha. Other parties hold 23 between them.

Next century will be Asia's, but keep an eye on China — Thatcher

MANILA (AFP) — The centre of economic gravity will shift from Europe to Asia in the next century, with China as the Asian power to watch because of its growing economic and military might, former British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher said Monday.

"Just as the scene shifts in a play, so the next act in world history will be set more in Asia than in Europe, more in the Pacific than in the Atlantic," she said.

Lady Thatcher, who is on the Manila leg of an Asian tour sponsored by Citibank NA, cited Asian qualities such as a strong work ethic, a sense of social discipline and a commitment to education among factors for the drift.

She also said that by 2000, Asia would have the largest number of people in the most economically productive age group — those between 20 to 40.

By the turn of the century, the United States would have 76 million in this group, with 94 million in Europe, 37 million in Japan, and 570 million in East Asia, Lady Thatcher said.

"They will constitute an unparalleled resource and a vast market," she told an audience of business and political leaders.

Trade between European Union countries and Asia rose by 12.9 per cent in 1994 to 250 billion ECUs ($320 billion), compared to an 11.5 per cent rate of increase in trade with the United States in the same year to 188 billion ECUs, according to a forum held in Venice, Italy over the weekend.

The former British leader, who resigned in 1990, also said that as the Asia-Pacific region attained a bigger global role, China's emerging military and economic might was "probably the most important development at the end of this century and for the beginning of the next."

"Given the pace of China's economic growth, her military strength is bound to increase, even if the proportion of national wealth spent on defence does no more than keep pace with its economic growth," she said.

"In practice, China is going to be a much more formidable military power than it is today," she added.

Lady Thatcher noted that Beijing has three million men under arms "and has shown itself ready to use the implied threat of that military power."

She cited China's actions in the six-nation dispute over the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea and its military exercises across the Strait of Taiwan in an apparent bid to intimidate the tiny island it considers a renegade province.

The Spratlys are claimed in whole or in part by Brunei, China, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan and Vietnam. Manila in February 1995 accused Beijing of encroaching on a Philippine-claimed reef, sparking a war of nerves.

Lady Thatcher said there was no need to be alarmed over China's intentions because while it has been protective of its national borders, "she has not historically been an expansionist power."

Recently, Beijing has also played a "more constructive part" in the United Nations Security Council, she noted.

But she said that the "best possible reassurance" to China's neighbours is when the Communist leadership will adopt a "more open and representative form of government and broader political participation."

She said that while a balance of power among regional powerhouses China, Japan and Russia is crucial to stability in the Asia-Pacific, continued U.S. military presence was still vital to security in the region.

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Symbolism by the wayside

THE HOLY month of Ramadan is off to the "usual" start we have been used to for many years now. Early signs are that people are still sacrificing the inner meaning of fasting at the altar of indulging in foods and sweets. Scenes from markets in the country on the first two days of Ramadan clearly showed that fasting people are still emptying shops from meat, poultry and sweets at record rates as if the message of the holy month is to fill up with rich foods rather than highlight the spirituality of the occasion and opt for lighter and simpler meals to break their fasting hours. Throngs of people could be seen literally competing with one another to snatch some delicacies from market shelves before they are emptied by the appearance of hungry crowds.

Fasting in Islam, of course, is not about stocking food and how to fill our stomachs at sunset. To the contrary, there is something much more spiritual about the holy month than traditional demonstration of superficial observance of the occasion. We blame, inter alia, religious educational programmes before and during Ramadan for not drawing enough attention to the true meaning of Ramadan and its quintessential message by calling on worshippers to forsake the material dimensions of life in favour of soul-searching for a simpler lifestyle. Ramadan is actually the time of the year when people are supposed to get closer to God and religion by observing more sincerely Islam's call for piety, sharing the life of deprivation being experienced by so many Muslims everywhere, and giving a helping hand to the needy. Devout Muslims are supposed to eat less, reflect more, shrug off bad material habits during the month of abstinence to cleanse their body and soul. What we can see in our midst, though, is anything but religious adherence to the edicts of proper fasting by so many people.

With all fairness, however, there are still some truly devout Muslims who are observing and practising the true meaning of fasting. But these people are a minority. The majority is still paying lip service to fasting by turning their days into nights and their nights into days. Many seize the occasion to work less, arrive at their offices later and leave earlier. The hours of a normally productive day are spent on shopping for food, sleeping and eating. No wonder the rate of heart attacks increase during fasting days and nights. Yet it is never too late to change negative habits and this is where we expect our religious leaders to say and do more in that vein. As is, Ramadan is being wasted on earthly pursuits that have nothing to do with its inherent symbolisms.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

WITH THE announcement of the results of the Palestinian elections, the Palestinians have achieved one of the most important steps towards building their independent state, said Al Ra'i Arabic daily Monday. The legislative set-up means a transition from the state of "revolutionary legitimacy" to "legitimate democracy," endorsed by the world community whose observers attested to the fair and free elections and the voting process exercised by the Palestinian masses for the first time in their entire history, according to the daily. Despite the boycott of certain political groups, the elections in which the majority of people took part were a proof that the Palestinians seek to pursue the process of constructing the solid foundations of a democratic and pluralistic society, dealing objectively with the realities and endeavouring to improve and achieve progress on all fronts, added the paper. Having organised general elections under most difficult conditions and in the face of overwhelming odds, added the daily, the Palestinian people has demonstrated a real determination to fulfill its long-sought dreams. The Jordanians, concluded the paper, can only rejoice at the success of democracy in Palestine and voice the best wishes for the success of the future Palestinian state.

A WRITER in Al Dustour supported a call on the government by the Jordan Valley Farmers Association to come to their help and promptly deal with issues plaguing farming and the farmers. The farmers pass through a difficult situation, with their debts accumulating due to the continual rise in the prices of pesticides and seeds, for example, and the poor marketing of agricultural crops in Jordan and abroad, said Mohammad Daoud. To help find a solution to the farmers' debts which now amout to JD 65 million, the government ought to force the big and wealthy farmers to pay back their dues and to reschedule the small farmers' debts, suggested the writer. At the same time, he said, the government must set up a task force to find long-lasting solutions to agricultural problems and to organise the relationship between food producers and middlemen, to adopt policies that can create a better climate for investments in the agricultural sector and provide protection to national products and help open new markets for Jordanian produce. The writer said that unless prompt action is taken, this important agricultural sector will continue to witness retreat, with dangerous consequences to the national economy.

January 1996: peace-making's pivotal month

This has been a very good month for Arab-Israeli peace making. January 1996 is likely to go down in history as the moment that launched the real test of peace making between Arabs and Israelis, because of five important things that have happened this month:

1. Implementation of the second stage of the Oslo agreement. This has always been crucial for disproving the sceptics who thought that the Oslo accord would never extend beyond Gaza and Jericho. The full verdict of the Oslo accord is not yet in, but its most cruel and doubtful critics have been proven resoundingly wrong so far, as we can see from the nationalistic jamboree now taking place in Palestine.

2. The Paris pledging conference for financial aid for the Palestinians, which came up with pledges of over $1.2 billion. This is important because, a) it shows that the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) has devised fiscal accounting and accountability systems that satisfy the international donors, and b) fresh global funding is still coming in to a nascent Palestine that places great importance on such expressions of international political and economic support. It is particularly noteworthy that the $550 million needed for a list of "core projects" presented at Paris was oversubscribed by $240 million. This is not a lot of money in terms of global economies; but it is an absolutely crucial sum in terms of Palestinian national rebirth.

3. The elections for the PNA presidency and legislative council, which have taken place in an atmosphere of relatively credible pluralism, freedom and democracy -- defined in our particular Arab/Semitic terms that view an 85 per cent victory by a presidential candidate as credible. This was less an election and more a tip-of-the-hat payback by the Palestinian people to Yasser Arafat and his Fateh faction for keeping alive the flame of Palestinian national dignity for more than three decades. If there had been any doubt about who would win the elections, they certainly would not have taken place at this time. But never mind. This was not an election mainly about democracy and pluralism; it was mainly a tribal reaffirmation that reconstituted traditional patriarchal politics in the hands of a ruling elite that has been overwhelmingly validated and celebrated by its own people, and simultaneously monitored, funded, cheered and approved by the entire world. By gosh, if Al Gore and Warren Christopher both drop in during the election campaign to signal their approval, that's pretty serious legitimation in today's world.

The Palestinian elections should be seen as a historic turning point whose importance stems from their national symbolism more than their political substance -- the symbolism of a Palestinian Arab people for the first time in their history choosing their own leaders, and thereby starting out on the long but exhilarating road to national sovereignty. It will happen, but it will not happen soon.

4. The progress on negotiations between Israel and Syria/Lebanon (!?!) is an important element in the overall prospects for genuine and durable peace in this region. Absence of Syrian-Lebanese-Israeli peace would not destroy Israel's existing peace accords with Jordan, Egypt and Palestine, but would continue to slow down the regional Arab inclination to normalise relations with Israel. Syria/Lebanon is/are not likely to wage war with Israel on its/their own in the near future, and thus it/their impact on the regional picture has declined somewhat in the last two years.

5. The completion of negotiation and ratification of the various Jordanian-Israeli bilateral agreements that stemmed from the October 1994 peace treaty. This is a sign that. a) the Jordanian peace with Israel will be qualitatively warmer and more productive than the Egyptian peace with Israel, b) the anti-normalisation trend within Jordan will not restrain the will of the Jordanian leadership and people to move ahead with a warm peace, c) the majority of Jordanians clearly accept and approve this warm peace, for the majority's silence is correctly to be interpreted as something between unspoken acquiescence a la Oriental cultural patriarchy and formal approval a la Oriental political patriarchy, and, d) the wider anti-normalisation trends within the Arab World have been unable to muster any credible opposition or alternatives to the Jordanian-Israeli style of peace making.

The silent majority in Jordan has been silent for four main reasons; I would suggest: the logistical constraints to normalisation with Israel because the bilateral accords were not finalised, a lack of material and economic benefits from peace, a sense of awkwardness that Jordan was normalising too quickly with Israel at a time when the Palestinians were getting nowhere fast and were still suffering occupation, imprisonment, land confiscations and other ugly aspects of living under Zionist military occupation, and the feeling that Jordan's rush to normalise with Israel was isolating us from our natural Arab hinterland (especially that Egypt chose a cold peace and Syria/Lebanon continue/s to suffer the chronic indignities of Israeli military occupation of its/their lands).

All four of these constraints experienced significant change and relief in January 1996. Syria/Lebanon is/are making progress in its/their negotiations with Israel, the Palestinians have achieved substantive gains in their quest for national dignity and rights, and the way is now open -- logistically, politically, economically and emotionally -- for Jordanians to forge mutually beneficial relations with Israelis, should they wish to do so.

I predict that we shall now see a steady increase in bilateral contacts between Jordanians and Israelis -- but only if one important condition is satisfied: if Israel finds a way to treat Jordanians who wish to visit Israel with less condescension and arrogance than it has in the recent past. Security, illegal employment and other legitimate Israeli concerns have kept the flow of Jordanian visitors to Israel down to a trickle. A concerted effort must be made to find a way around some of these problems, in a manner that reduces rather than heightens the increasingly common Jordanian perception of Israel as a bastion of arrogance and self-righteous superiority. It is sadly ironic that peace should increase such feelings about Israel among many Jordanians. It is urgent that this perception be set right, for Israeli relations with both Jordan and with other Arabs -- because this same obstacle stands in the way of faster normalisation with other Arab countries.

Most Israelis with whom I have spoken with honesty and sincerity in the last two years have a very hard time appreciating this point, but it is vital that they do so now that we are passing through the historic changes and new hopes of January 1996. Most Israelis do not believe that they are belittling or humiliating the Palestinians and other Arabs in the current peace process. They do not quite understand why most Aabs are not in the same hurry to normalise relations as most Israelis are. The answer is as much cultural as political. In Arab/Semitic culture, issues such as honour, shame, dignity and respect carry enormous weight, to the point often of overriding more straightforward issues of security, land or other material matters. Now that the path towards mutually beneficial relations is open to Jordanians and Israelis, these cultural and human concerns need to be taken into greater consideration, because the political and logistical ones have all been resolved. It is important to recognise that most Jordanian and other Arab criticism of Israel's treaties with or treatment of adjacent Arabs is spoken in the language of justice and injustice, and of dignity and indignity.

It has taken just over four years -- from the Madrid conference to January 1996 -- for Jordan, Palestine, and Israel to reach the point today where we have collectively removed most of the political and legal obstacles to true people-to-people contacts, coexistence, reconciliation and conperation for our mutual wellbeing. In other words, the real test of peace-making begins this month; everything up until now has been preparatory and logistical. What we witness this month, though, is precisely the key promise of incremental, substantive progress that was expected by those of us, myself included, who have supported the Oslo and the Jordan-Israel peace talks from their inception, even when it was highly unfashionable to do so.

The big bilateral issues between Israel and Palestine will start to be negotiated this year, including Jerusalem, settlements, water, borders and refugees. I would suggest that the ultimate success of the peace process now depends primarily on how Jordanians, Palestinians and Israelis act during the coming year. If we use the year to forge relations that are emotionally and politically satisfying because they are equitable and non-denigrating, and if we reconfigure the regional economies so that material benefits and hope for the future flow to the households of average families and not only to the already rich and powerful, then a meaningful and durable peace will triumph. In that case, the big issues loom less big and more manageable, because we would have laid the groundwork for a process of compromise that can be seen by all concerned parties to be politically productive and emotionally non-humiliating.

If, however, we do not seize the opportunities for interaction, reconciliation and progress that have been opened for us in January 1996; if we remain stubbornly stuck on little pieces of land rather than grasping the promise of a revival of our tradition of pan-Semitic humanism, then the year 1996 will go down in history not as the end of the Arab-Israeli 100 years war, but rather only as a deceptive and naive interlude in a conflict that was destined, like European colonialism and American racism, to last for centuries. This month tends to suggest that the majority of Arabs and Israelis have chosen the option of pan-Semitic humanism, even if very gradually reconstituted.

Public expenditure and privatisation...a partial outlook

By Maher Al Waked

ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES which result from the state's public spending are of a vast magnitude. They include and reach all spheres of economic as well as social life. Therefore, and for the sake of maintaining these activities, the foundation of the public expenditure policy should be laid.

When the features of our 1996 budget stipulate that the volume of public expenditure will be in the region of JD 1,745 million, the implication is that the effects of this expenditure will be deeply rooted in our lives. Hence public spendings should be considered as an important tool to reach certain goals.

Public expenditures have their immense impact on production and labour forces through their impact on the volume of the total demand, the importance of that increases according to the magnitude of the state's interference in both economic and social activities. Direct expenses in themselves are but a key element in creating and shaping a demand on services and commodities.

Public expenditures are naturally equal to public revenues. That is to say governments determine, first the volume of expenses they require to finance their social and economy ends, then they determine accordingly the ways to obtain and derive the revenues necessary and equal to these expenditures. From an economic point of view, public revenues are deducted from the national income and, therefore, any increase in the latter would allow an increase in the former. The public expenditures are to be embodied in the economic current to generate additional demand and consequently to generate more incomes and eventually an additional capacity for an increased revenue then an increased basis for an additional expenditure threatre and so on.

The above role was instrumental for the state, any state, that follows the so called directed or controlled economy, when the government takes the leading role in its economy, leaving a small one for the private sector to function with.

Now as we are entering a new era that calls for the state to refrain from intervention in the economic activities and to reverse the functions by giving the private sector the leading role, that is expected to endow the country with a continuous vitality and progress, relieving the many government-led projects from the well-known shortcomings of the public method of management and administration, and to inject easily any required funds needed for these projects.

This leads to be conclusion that privatisation is not bad in it self if handled well. We should go all out in order to meet that target at once. A step-by-step approach would prove to be useful if we want to learn, evaluate and, accomplish the task smoothly and safely. The private sector has its own shortcomings as well, so we have to give the new method adequate time if we want to make our steps steady and our goals a success.

State Department spokesman defends U.S. military aid to Turkey

WASHINGTON (AP) – U.S. officials are concerned about human rights abuses in Turkey but do not necessarily share the conclusions of a CBS "60 Minutes" segment, State Department spokesman Nicholas Burns said Tuesday.

Mr. Burns said the United States has no reason to apologise for military aid to the strong ally and condemns the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK) as a terrorist organisation.

The spokesman said he had not seen the TV programme which brought a diplomatic protest from Turkey. The government in Ankara earlier Tuesday summoned an American enjoy to explain statements made by U.S. officials on the programme aired Sunday.

Mr. Burns said he had not seen the CBS programme, but he said it had been described to him. The programme featured excerpts from interviews with State Department officials John Shattuck and John Kornblum.

"I wouldn't say that Assistant Secretary Shattuck or Deputy Assistant Secretary Kornblum agreed with the basic line taken by '60 Minutes.' '60 Minutes' choose to take the position it did. It carried very short excerpts of very long interviews with both men," Mr. Burns said.

According to a CBS transcript, Mr. Kornblum was asked whether there was any difference between destruction of Kurdish villages in Turkey and destruction of Kurdish villages in Iraq by the government of Saddam Husscin.

His reply: "If you're in the village, there's no difference whatsoever."

Mr. Shattuck said human rights issues and problems in Turkey have been documented. Asked if the Turkish government murders civilians, he replied, "right."

"This is not an effective way to fight - the - terrorist activity," Mr. Shattuck said, according to the transcript. "It only alienates a very large - segment of the population, and causes massive human rights abuses."

Onur Oymen, Turkey's deputy foreign minister, said Turkey was considering legal action against CBS for the programme which he called an example of "unethical and bad journalism."

Mr. Oymen was also interviewed on the programme, giving the government point of view, as was PKK leader Abdullah Ocalan, who criticised U.S. Military aid to Turkey.

The Turkish government criticised CBS producers for not revealing the location of the 'safe house' where they met Mr. Ocalan. The government says the rebel leader lives in Syria.

Mr. Burn said, "we do have concerns about the manner in which the Turkish government has acted in some instances. We are troubled by continuing reports of torture, of restrictions on freedom of the press, and on some extra-judicial killings, troubled by reports of the burning of villages and the forced evacuation of villages."

He said Turkey has taken significant steps to defend human rights in recent months.

He also repeated strong endorsement for Turkey as an ally:

"Turkey is a valued NATO friend and ally, and our military assistance to Turkey makes sense. It makes sense for the United States and it makes sense for Turkey... And there are no apologies to be made for American military assistance to Turkey as a valued NATO ally.

"In addition, the United States fully supports the Turkish government in its fight against the PKK, which we have noted several times - many times over - is a vicious terrorist organisation."

LETTERS

Forum to enhance women's role

To the Editor:

There is no doubt that women in Jordan, who make up half of the society, have an effective and comprehensive role to play in the development of their communities. Their participation in the economic and productive sectors is rapidly increasing and women have attained considerable success in many fields.

When, at the end of December, Her Royal Highness Princess Basma, a pioneer of the women's movement in the Kingdom, set the basis for the establishment of a national forum for women, the aim was that of shaping generations to come, choosing a group of patriotic, competent women that would educate the youth in the spirit of loyalty to the country and free from prejudices and bigotry.

As we are heading towards the 21st century, we should be prepared to face the challenges and cope with the multitude of changes, modernisation processes and technological competition.

The Jordanian woman is known to have lived and felt the pains and hardships of the nation. She made all efforts to coexist with Jordan's dreams and hopes and attempted to materialise them by all possible means.

I believe that cooperation among women, exchange of intellectual experiences, education and instilling self-confidence, among others, are factors that could lead to the full utilisation of women's potentials and capabilities for the benefit of the country.

It is hoped that the newly established forum for women will be the cornerstone and will provide an incentive for actions to the betterment of our society.

Zohoor Al Rabadi,
Member, women's committee, Balqa

The Jordan Times welcomes letters and contributions from its readers on any subject they wish to tackle. Letters intended for publication, however, should contain the writer's full name and preferably address as well. Names can be withheld only upon request and under special circumstances. Letters are subject to editing. The newspaper is not responsible for the return of unused manuscripts.

Crown Prince Hassan — a life dedicated to peace and understanding

By Antonia Dimou

HIS ROYAL Highness Crown Prince Hassan Bin Talal has been active in a wide spectrum of activities which are related to the establishment of a just and lasting peace in the Middle East, the development of science and research, the advancement of the humanitarian law and the promotion of the dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims in an attempt for better understanding among peoples.

The Crown Prince is considered to be among those personalities who have promoted the cause of the peace movement during recent decades as he had realised that the solution of the Palestine question was central for the stability of the region. That is the reason why all his attempts focused on the succour of the Palestinian people for them to reach self-determination and sovereign independence, rights they have been deprived of for years.

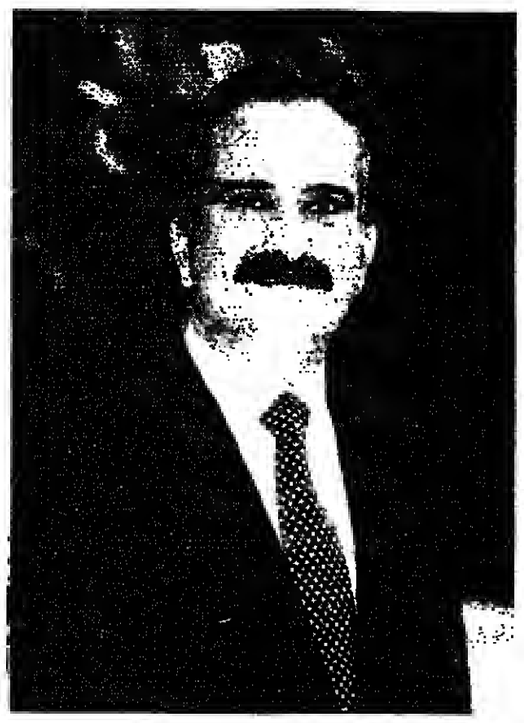
By being clear-sighted, the Crown Prince has made visionary forecast about the Palestinian case, a number of which are included in his study "Search for Peace", carried out in 1984. Through the above study it can be understood that he contributed to the formulation of the Jordanian foreign policy by taking into account the fact that Israel's sole policy was one of survival and that, of course, was not a long-term basis upon which a state could exist. So as he successfully had predicted, there was a strong desire by Israel for international recognition and peace which could bring an end to its isolation.

Regarding the Arab side, the Crown Prince had also successfully foreseen that for the sake of peace Arabs would ultimately have to recognise and accept the presence of an Israeli state in the Near East.

During an interview on the eve of the opening of the three-day Middle East and North Africa (MENA) economic summit, Prince Hassan admitted publicly that in fact, "the quid pro quo of the past was that we will deal with Israel because it is isolated in the region and we will offer preferential arrangement like MFN (most favoured nation status) in compensation for the ostracising (of Israel) that the region has been responsible for in the eyes of the industrialised world."

Moreover, he had pointed out the procedures that had to be adopted for the settlement of peace by realising the necessity of the participation in the peace process of a third party which could not only remove the obstacles but also introduce a mutual formula upon which the commencement of proper negotiations among both parties — Arabs and Israelis — could become reality.

When the process of peace started to outline a good course, the Crown Prince demonstrated that what decides events is not cheers but efforts to make up for the lost



time, in combination with hard work, because these are the features which can contribute to the achievement of a beneficial outcome.

His Royal Highness belongs to that group of politicians who has realised and clarified the fact that the security and the expansion of peace are dependent on the economic development of the region. That is the reason why, in an attempt to assure the regional security which is connected with the prosperity and the well-being of each country, he carried out a number of trips to the countries of Europe and Asia. These trips prepared for the economic agreements that have been signed during the Amman summit.

Moreover, the Crown Prince is not only considered to be a man of principle who has devoted his life to serving his country and the whole Arab World but also one of the most intellectual politicians of the international community.

Under his direct patronage, in 1987 the Higher Council for Science and Technology (HCST) was established to further the funding and the development of the national scientific and technological base. The direct support for scientific and developmental research as well as the consideration of appropriate technologies for the various sectors, within the framework of what the Higher Council ordains in each of these fields, have been two of its vital policies.

Other institutions whose establishment has been sponsored by Prince Hassan and are affiliated to the HCCT are: the Royal Scientific Society, the Institute of Diplomacy, the National Centre for Human Resources Development and the National Information Centre.

The functions of the mentioned centres concentrate on cooperation in science and technology with local, Arab and other organisations, for the purpose of conducting joint projects and undertaking research which can lead to the production of prototypes for potential industrial applications, as well as upgrading human capabilities and skills through the provision of specification opportunities.

As far as the Institute of Diplomacy is concerned, it has been established in order to fill the need for an institutional framework which can upgrade the effectiveness of the Jordanian diplomats and those politicians who are involved in the formulation of the foreign policy making.

The National Centre for Human Resources Development was established in 1989 and one of its main functions is related to the creation of an educational management information system which could improve the quality and efficiency of the national education system.

As far as the National Information Centre is concerned, one of its main priorities has to do with the provision of the most up-to-date data and analysis for the maximal benefit of the public and private sectors.

The building of an information system at the national level, in coordination with all information networks, is one of the centre's main purposes, required to be achieved in the near future.

Furthermore, the Crown Prince, by having been instrumental in the creation of the Independent Commission of Humanitarian Issues, has gained the respect of the wider international community. The commission acknowledges that the majority of the humanitarian problems would have become less acute if fundamental rights were respected.

The Crown Prince has also focused the international attention on the factors of the continuous world misery and made proposals, on a practical and institutional basis, many of which are included in the collective study "Winning the Human Race?", for their possible elimination by always taking into account the extent of action as well as the extent of limitations on each endeavour that may take place.

Moreover, it is widely known that Prince Hassan is one of the staunchest supporters of the inter-faith dialogue between Christians, Jews and Muslims. During a dinner hosted by him on the occasion of the MENA summit, he said in a speech before participants that "a constructive dialogue between the different faiths is an essential component of the required new agenda. Otherwise, we may easily regress into a new form of inter-communal confrontation that will undermine the peace being concluded among governments. That is why Jordan has been promoting inter-religious dialogue and inter-cultural, inter-civilisational dialogue through the last two decades."

Crown Prince Hassan contributed to the foundation of the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilisation Research in 1980 which, in conperation with the Switzerland-based Orthodox Centre of the Ecumenical Patriarchate, has taken the initiative to organise each year a meeting for the moral uplift, the better understanding and the dissipation of the prejudices which exist between the two religions.

He has underlined the importance of de-linking Islam with terrorism by clarifying that "acts of violence associated with Muslim immigrants in Europe and elsewhere are in reality an example of communal violence. They have nothing to do with Islam as such. They relate to racial conflict and socio-economic stagnation."

He has also realised, as it can be easily confirmed in his book "The Christians in the Modern Arab World," the significant contribution of the Arab Christians in collaboration with the Arab Muslims to the development of the Arab society. To those who are obsessed with short-term financial calculations and as a result expect through this dialogue a material and not a spiritual benefit, the Crown Prince says: "What value can you attach to one human life saved, whether Muslim, Jewish or Christian?"

In a few words, it could be said that the Crown Prince belongs to that rare kind of politicians who have not foresaken the idea of Arab and international solidarity because of the various adversities which appear on the political scene. On the contrary, he has fostered regional and international, social, religious and economical development for the sake of a long and comprehensive peace.

The writer is a research fellow at the University of Jordan's Centre for Strategic Studies. She contributed the above article to the Jordan Times.

Jordan to cut Iraq exports

(Continued from page 1)

ands, but represent an important source for cash-trapped Iraq for its needs of food and medicine, which are also exempt from the trade embargo.

Payment for private sector exports to Iraq were made from an annual $400 million escrow account that the government maintained at the Central Bank of Jordan.

A source quoted by Reuter said that Jordan wanted to build its foreign exchange reserves to $1 billion by the end of 1996. "We cannot keep paying large amounts of money to local traders to settle their exports to Iraq while Baghdad's debts to Amman continue to stay high," the source was quoted as saying.

("Hence, we had to take such a drastic decision to look after our national interests, and at the same time, to help continue to help the average Iraqi citizen by continuing basic supplies," the source told Reuter).

The move to reduce the flow of goods in return for oil comes amid signs that Iraq might be willing to consider a United Nations offer for limited oil sales to raise funds for food and medicine. If the Iraq-United Nations discussions were successful, then Baghdad is expected to be able to pay cash for its imports.

"Absolutely not," said one source when asked whether the obviously cool political relations between Amman and Baghdad had prompted the decision to reduce trade. "The decision was based purely on economic and financial grounds, and has nothing to do with the state of political relations between the two countries."

That was a reference to an apparent strain in ties after Jordan granted asylum to Iraqi President Saddam Hussein's two daughters and their husbands, one of them a close confidant to President Saddam and the brains behind the country's clandestine military programme, who defected to the Kingdom in August.

Iraq has also criticised Jordan's suggestion that a federation could be answer for the deep divisions among the country's three major communities and the Kingdom's support for calls for democracy and political pluralism as well as respect for human rights in its eastern neighbour.

Iraqi Minister of Trade Mohammad Mehdi Saleh, in an interview with the local weekly tabloid Shihan last week, said his country rejected the Jordanian call as an "interference" in its internal affairs. Jordan has denied the charge.

"Iraq, with its independence and sovereignty, decides for itself in all its internal affairs just as it does not interfere in others' internal affairs," Mr. Saleh was quoted as saying by Shihan. "We also believe that no other country has any right to interfere in the internal affairs of Jordan."

"We hope our relationship with Jordan will remain strong and good," he told Shihan, adding that the defection of Hussein Kamel, President Saddam's son-in-law who served as the country's minister of industry, did not have any impact on Iraqi-Jordanian relations.

According to the minister, the Iraqi oil supply to Jordan had gone up in 1995 and 50 per cent of its was supplied free under orders from President Saddam.

The move to halve Jordanian exports to Iraq was sure to draw strong opposition from Jordanian exporters, many of whom argue that the bulk of their production is sent to Iraq.

"We have heard about the reduction in exports to Iraq but we do not have any official notification in this regard," said an official at the Amman Chamber of Industry, a leading advocate of increased trade ties with Iraq.

"If it is true that there is indeed a decision to reduce exports to Iraq then we are going to fight it," said the official, who did not want to be identified. "Many Jordanian industries, which are members of the Amman Chamber of Industry, would suffer badly if exports to Iraq are reduced."

Jordan to get IMF credit

(Continued from page 1)

ongoing negotiations between Jordan and the European Union on a partnership agreement.

"The programme further deepens the authorities' structural reform efforts, most importantly in the areas of government finances, the regulatory framework and the trade system," he said.

"The reforms (envisaged under the programme agreed with the IMF) are to be underpinned by prudent demand management policies, including further reductions in the fiscal deficit and a supportive domestic interest rate policy," said Mr. Erian.

"Accompanied by appropriate financial assistance from the international community, the programme will strengthen Jordan's balance of payments and foreign exchange reserve positions, improve the environment for domestic and foreign investment, and sustain high economic growth coupled with low inflation," said the IMF official.

The World Bank, which works in tandem with the IMF, is expected to extend up to $140 million new credit to Jordan in 1996.

Bosnia's gem of Ottoman architecture lies in ruins

By Francois Raitberger
Reuter

MOSTAR — Postcards of Mostar show a pretty, relaxed town.

Tourists in shorts and T-shirts throng the narrow streets of the old quarter, snapping pictures of the elegant Ottoman-era houses and mediaeval towers.

The arched 16th-century Stari Most (old bridge), pride of the south Bosnian town, has place of honour on most postcards, with youths diving into the Neretva River 10 metres below watched by crowds of sunbathers.

There are no postcards of today's Mostar, one of the towns most devastated by fighting in former Yugoslavia.

Hit by Croat artillery during fighting in 1993, the old bridge in the ancient Muslim quarter has collapsed, its revered white stones swallowed by the river.

The Neretva, which locals call the world's greenest river, still flows emerald green. But it runs between rows of ruins, heaps of stones from destroyed houses, its riverside bushes festooned with dirty plastic bags left by floods.

The new hotel Ruza, which once proudly displayed its spacious lounges and deep armchairs on postcards, is a roofless, bullet-pocked white shell.

Mosques still call the hour for prayer but their slim minarets have been beheaded by shells. One minaret still stands but the roof of its mosque is gone. So are the roofs of the medieaval towers that flank the old bridge.

The deserted boulevard on the confrontation line dividing the Muslim east side from the Croat west, runs in Eerie silence through Skeletons of collapsed and Gutted buildings with countless bullet marks and shell-holes testifying to the intensity of the fighting.

"It's just like Beirut," said a French gendarme of Mostar's European Union (EU) police force who has seen other wars.

The EU has been administering the divided town for 18 months, trying to overcome hatred and mistrust and restore its multi-ethnic past.

The EU headquarters, in a hotel on the Croat side, swarms with the actors of war and peace — EU observers dressed in white like cricket players, NATO officers of the IFOR peace force in Camouflage Fatigues, members of the multi-national EU police force in their national uniforms, television crews.

The EU experiment, designed to hold elections for a single local administration by the end of May, has become a test of the Dayton Bosnia peace agreement as tension has risen because of a series of violent incidents.

At the moment only a trickle of women cross over a bridge rebuilt by the EU among the ruins.

On a narrow strip between the river and the hills, the Muslim side has borne the brunt of the destruction and division is hitting its economy harder. Shops and restaurants are largely empty and the postcard shop sees only a handful of foreign journalists and members of international organisations.

Grim-faced people queue for German-made fuel brickettes handed out by (U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

The Croat side, which enjoys communication with the outside world through Croatia, looks better off. As on the Muslim side, most people are unemployed, the EU administration says.

The sound of the hammer near the old bridge signals a timid attempt at rebuilding a house with makeshift materials. But the task is immense.

The EU administration, which has spent more than 210 million marks ($143 million) in the past 18 months, says it will complete an emergency programme to repair more than 5,000 slightly damaged dwellings by the end of the month.

Many badly damaged buildings are in danger of collapse and will have to be demolished.

Arafat firmly in control

(Continued from page 1)

complained to the election organisers after being told they had clinched one of the seats only to be disappointed just hours later.

With 81 council races decided, 59 seats went to official candidates of Fateh or its allies, 15 to independents, four to Islamic militants and three to members of small parties, election officials said.

Usama Abu Safieh, conrdinator for the CEC said: "We are making the final check for Gaza North and Gaza City... We will announce everything when we get the whole count, probably not tonight."

A recount was ordered in the Jenin region of the West Bank, CEC officials said.

A coalition of 650 international election observers declared Monday that despite some irregularities, the election had by-and-large been fair and "an accurate expression of the will of the voters."

European Union (EU) observer spokesman Ian Blackly said Monday that the monitors were looking into the new problems.

"Our observers are still in the field following up on the delays," he said.

"You must remember it's that their first election, it's an extraordinarily complicated business for them. We hope it is just technical hitches."

But some of the 670 candidates hoping to capture seats on the council were losing patience with the disorder.

Rawya Al Shawa, an independent, said she was told on Sunday night that she won one of the 12 seats from Gaza City, but woke up the next day to be stripped of the honour.

She delivered a complaint to CEC Chairman Mahmoud Abbas as a group of supporters gathered in front of her house Monday to protest.

Amid much confusion because of the unofficial results trickling in, the seat reserved for Christians in Gaza City went from Iskander Tarazi to Faraj Al Saraf overnight.

And in the West Bank city of Hebron, independent candidate were meeting Monday to discuss a possible protest over the confusion in their district.

On Sunday, Mr. Arafat's former spokesman, Marwan Kanafani, had a more happy fate — going from loser to winner.

Despite the problems, the elections clearly handed Mr. Arafat a powerful mandate for his staged strategy for achieving independent statehood, analysts said.

Mr. Abbas, who was a leading figure in negotiations with Israel which led to Saturday's vote, declared that "the council which was elected has brought us five minutes from independence."

He said the council, due to govern Palestinian territories on the West Bank and Gaza Strip during an interim three-year period, "will declare independence during its term."

"There is no doubt that the Palestinian elections represent an essential milestone on the road to creation of a Palestinian state," added senior Arafat adviser Nabil Abu Rudeina on Monday.

Mr. Arafat himself declared the election "the most important step towards a Palestinian state."

Independent members of the council said meanwhile any alliance they might form would serve as a strong opposition to Mr. Arafat and Fateh.

Some of the better-known independents included Haidar Abdul Shafi, the former head of the Palestinian team to peace talks, Hanan Ashrawi, a former spokeswoman of the delegation, political science professor Ziad Abu Amr and Jawad Abdul Saleh.

Mr. Saleh, a veteran nationalist who won in Ramallah on the West Bank, said he would criticise the Palestinian National Authority from the floor of the council if it continued to arrest journalists and human rights activists.

"This will be a crime against human rights and everyone who dares to do it should be punished," said Mr. Saleh referring to arrests in the run-up to the elections of journalist Maher Alami and Bassem Eid, a human rights monitor.

Mr. Saleh also said he would press the authority to appoint new peace negotiators with Israel in a bid to get better terms for the Palestinians in future talks. "What they have done so far does not make a sustainable peace," he said.

Dr. Ashrawi told a press conference she intended to use her seat in the council to "speak out without any party constraints, to speak out on anything that reqnires courageous intervention.

"It will be difficult to marginalise the real independents," she said.

Many Arafat supporters who could not gain places on lists ran as independents, and Dr. Ashrawi appeared to be referring to figures outside Fateh with strong personal reputations such as Mr. Saleh and herself.

Bishara Dawood, who won as an independent in the Bethlehem district, said he had his own ideas and does not belong to any grouping.

But the Israeli-deposed former mayor of Beit Jalla, near Bethlehem, said he would look forward to working together with Fateh representatives in the council.

"I don't think Fateh intends to give Jerusalem to the Israelis or leave us without independence. On this we are together."

Meanwhile congratulations to Mr. Arafat poured from around the globe.

"Jan. 20 will enter into history as another important step towards Palestinian self determination and peaceful co-existence between the Palestinian and Israeli people," European Commission President Jacques Santer told Mr. Arafat in a telegramme.

France hailed the huge turnout and Mr. Arafat's triumphant election as a massive endorsement of peace with Israel.

President Jacques Chirac was one of the first world leaders to congratulate Mr. Arafat. "Through you, the Palestinian people have clearly chosen peace, stability and economic development in the Middle East," he told him in a letter.

The left-of-centre daily Liberation's foreign affairs commentator Jacques Amalric wrote: "Whatever (Israeli Prime Minister) Shimon Peres says, the voters of Gaza and the West Bank drew the first draft of a Palestinian state on Saturday."

South African President Nelson Mandela, another guerrilla-turned-president, also telephoned the Palestinian leader "to wish him well in building a new society and democracy."

German Foreign Minister Klaus Kinkel congratulated Mr. Arafat "for an impressive election victory and the Palestinian people for a clear endorsement of the autonomy and peace process."

He said the high turnont and generally peaceful nature of the election "bear witness to the democratic maturity of Palestinian society."

British Foreign Secretary MalColm Rifkind congratulated Mr. Arafat and said Jan. 20 was "an historic day — a turning point for Palestinian democracy."

Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Viktor Posuvalyuk said: "Yasser Arafat believed and believes in Russia and we believed and believe in him."

King Fahd of Saudi Arabia congratulated Mr. Arafat and promised to back his self-rule authority, the official news agency SPA reported.

King Fahd, who addressed Mr. Arafat as "His Excellency the President" in a telegramme, assured the Palestinian leader of "Saudi Arabia's constant position towards the Palestinian people and its legitimate aims."

Crown Prince Abdullah, who took over the running of state earlier this month from the ailing king, sent a similar message.

Egypt's Foreign Minister Amr Mousa, whose country played a key role in mediating the peace accord between Israel and the Palestinians, said the elections were a historic step towards the creation of an independent Palestinian state.

Mr. Arafat's main rival, the Hamas movement, which boycotted the vote, dismissed Mr. Arafat's overwhelming margin as weak.

Damascus-based radical Palestinian groups condemned the results and said Mr. Arafat's success was false. They called for new elections that would include Palestinians living abroad.

The Arab League felicitated Mr. Arafat while expressing sympathy to Palestinian refugees scattered across the Middle East and who were deprived from casting their votes.

Algeria's President Liamine Zeroual and Tunisian President Zine Al Abidine Ben Ali said Mr. Arafat's victory as "a crowning achievement of the Palestinian people struggles" and renewed their support for a Palestinian state.

Italian newspapers called Mr. Arafat's triumph a victory for peace with Israel. But they said hard tasks lay ahead to cement Palestinian democracy and lasting concord with Israel.

"These elections do not only represent a deserved triumph for Yasser Arafat. They are also a posthumous victory for (former Isreali Prime Minister Yitzhak) Rabin, who gave his life for them," Corriere Della Sera newspaper said.

Chinese President Jiang Zemin sent a message extending bis "warm congratulations." He said the elections were "the important result of the long and unremitting struggle waged by the Palestinian people under your excellency's leadership."

Leaders of the 15-nation European Union were also fulsome in their congratulations and praise.

Chancellor Helmut Kohl of Germany stressed his belief that the election result confirmed the desire of the Palestinian people for peace and democracy. He assured the Palestinian leader of Germany's continued support, saying the peace process bad entered a new phase and the new Palestinian democracy was "a partner worthy of confidence."

Spanish Premier Felipe Gonzalez hailed the "high turnout and the smooth running" of the elections in the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem.

Austrian Foreign Minister Wolfgang Schuessel said Mr. Arafat's overwhelming victory "clearly expressed the Palestinians' wish to pursue the peace process, which will soon lead to a wide-ranging self-determination."

Gulf Arab states saw the result as strengthening Mr. Arafat's position in negotiations on the final status of the Palestinian territories. However, countires opposed to his autonomy deals with Israel dismissed the election as a farce. Libya said it "consecrated the policy of surrendering to the Israeli enemy."

In Tehran, the newspaper Jomhouri-Eslami, which is close to Iran's Muslim fundamentalists, took a different line. It said that Mr. Arafat had "fallen into a trap set by the Americans and the Zionists, and the election results will not save him."

The newspaper said the elections result would not mean that Mr. Arafat would be able to repress anti-Zionist activity in the occupied territories.

Turkish President Suleiman Demirel telephoned Mr. Arafat to express the hope that the democratic elections would contribute to the Middle East peace process, the Turkish president's office said in a statement.

Oil prices slide as Iraq agrees more U.N. oil talks

LONDON (R) — World oil prices were sharply lower Monday after Iraq accepted an invitation from the United Nations to resume discussions on a U.N. oil-for-food plan.

International benchmark North Sea Brent Blend futures opened at $16.81 a barrel in London, down 31 cents from Friday's close.

A new round of talks between Iraq and the United Nations yet again raises the prospect of Baghdad selling some 700,000 barrels per day (b/d) of crude oil on international markets.

The U.N. imposed an oil export ban on Iraq after its 1990 invasion of Kuwait but since late 1991 has offered strictly controlled sales for humanitarian aid.

Iraq has repeatedly rejected the U.N. offer on the grounds that strict U.N. monitoring of distribution of the aid would violate its sovereignty.

Oil prices went into a tailspin last week when Iraq made it known it wanted to resume the U.N. talks, only to recover when it became clear Baghdad still rejected conditions for oil sales contained in U.N. resolution 986.

Oil traders Monday remained sceptical that any new round of talks would result in a resumption of Iraqi crude sales to world markets. Similar discussions in 1992 and 1993 failed.

"This serves to remind us that Iraq on occasion likes to exercise its influence over the world oil market," said Peter Gignoux, head of the energy desk at brokerage Smith Barney in London. "But as far as a fundamental analysis of the situation is concerned, there's no change."

There remained no indication from Baghdad that Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was about to change his opposition to the U.N. terms for the oil sale.

A statement read out over state rapid by Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz simply said Baghdad was ready to resume discussions. There was no reference to U.N. resolution 986, which Mr. Aziz last week roundly rejected, saying Iraq would only talk as long as no preconditions were imposed.

Gulf sources last week said that Sandi Arabia, the world's largest oil exporter, did not expect to see the flow of Iraqi exports resume "for a very long time," at least not for the remainder of this year.

U.N. resolution 986 would allow Iraq to sell $2 billion worth of oil over six months to buy food and medicine. It can be renewed and possibly renegotiated after six months.

Despite the reservations, dealers said oil markets were likely to remain jittery until Iraqi intentions were made clear again.

"As long as we anticipate the talks, the markets are going to going to be under pressure," said James Ritterbusch of Sweeney Oil in the United States.

No date or venue has yet been set for the discussions.

U.N. Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali is authorised to talk to Iraq about the how the oil sale measures can be implemented and food distributed. But he cannot change the parameters set by the U.N. resolution.

Iraq has to date demanded that the U.N. ban be lifted entirely. This depends on Baghdad fulfilling Security Council demands that it reveal and destroy all its weapons of mass destruction but there were new disclosures last August of concealed past arms programmes.

Economists see dollar retreating against yen in 96/97

TOKYO (R) — The dollar will likely retreat slightly from recent peaks against the yen in the new business year from April, but is expected to keep its current steady tone, a Reuters poll of leading economists showed Monday.

In the poll, 20 private economists in Tokyo and London predicted on average that the dollar would hover at 101.43 yen at the end of the 1996/97 fiscal year, well below the current level of around 105.70 yen.

Many economists said the United States, already faced with a slowing economy, might ease its grip on credit more than once in the coming months, taking some lustre off the dollar.

"Short-term U.S. interest rates are in an easing mode and this will help the yen gather strength towards March (1997)," said Hiroshi Suzuki of Norinchukin Research Institute in Tokyo. He saw the dollar weakening to 98.00 yen at end-March 1997.

Mr. Suzuki said although he does not see any change in Japan's discount rate, the more densitive overnight call rate might head up slightly in the later half of this year.

The U.S. Federal Reserve has set a target for the key federal funds rate at 5½ per cent, while Japan has kept its key overnight call rate at just below the 0.5 per cent official discount rate.

Average forecasts in the poll, conducted in mid-January, saw the dollar at 103.40 yen at end-March this year, 104.37 at end-June, 103.08 at end-September and 102.53 at end-December.

Of the total, 10 economists saw the dollar falling below 105 yen by end-March 1997, three saw it going up, and the rest predicted no change or gave no estimates for the period.

"It's hard to grasp a clear currency direction now," said Tetsuro Sawano, an economist at Nikko Research Centre. "It will be basically in a boxed range of between 100 to 110 yen."

Economists agreed the recent dollar rebound to 105 yen — a 30 per cent jump from its record low in April — was due largely to recent rapid falls in Japan's vast current account surplus.

But the pace of decline in the controversial surplus will slow from those in October and November, when it fell 52 per cent and 27 per cent respectively from a year ago, they said.

"The falling surplus is now eroding pressures to buy yen. But given current global interest rate gaps, it's hard to believe the yen's decline will continue without a break," said Jun Yamamoto, an economist at the Industrial Bank of Japan. "The yen might strengthen a bit for now but not very much."

Iraq raises petrol prices, imposes new taxes

BAGHDAD (R) — Iraq has raised petrol prices and issued new taxes as part of its to drive withdraw excess money from circulation and boost the value of the Iraqi dinar, residents and the official press said Monday.

Taxi drivers in Baghdad said the price of a litre (0.22 gallon) of petrol went up to 1.4 dinars from 0.2 dinar. In U.S. dollar terms the new price is still a fraction of a cent and within reach of car owners in Iraq.

The dollar hovered at 2,200 dinars Monday, down from its record 3,010 two weeks ago.

Iraq's oil reserves are the world's second largest after Saudi Arabia. U.N. economic sanctions, imposed for Baghdad's 1990 invasion of Kuwait, include a ban on its oil exports.

Early this year the government issued new economic guidelines to fight hyper-inflation and soaring prices. It liberalised the exchange rate and started pricing its giveaway utilities taking profit and cost into consideration.

More and more state property — cars, spare parts, factories, machinery, land and even scrap — is being offered for sale to finance the 1996 budget.

The government has halted the printing of more paper money and the official press quoted Finance Minister Hikmat Al Azzawi Monday as saying there was no backing down on policy to squeeze government spending and increase revenues.

Newspapers published a decree by the Revolutionary Command Council doubling fees for ganting of building licences in the country.

Issuing a building permit in Baghdad will now cost 200,000 dinars instead of 100,000 and 100,000 in the provinces instead of 50,000.

The official press say the policy is bearing fruits as the dinar is now about 25 per cent stronger than last year and prices of essential commodities at their lowest for months.

But traders in Baghdad attributed the dinar's strength to news on Iraq's acceptance to enter talks with the U.N. over a deal to sell limited amounts of oil in exchange for food and medicines.

"The recent developments on the resumption of dialogue between Iraq and the United Nations will positively reflect on the reforms advocated by the state in the economic field," Mr. Azzawi said.

The more than seven-fold surge in price of petrol was no surprise to Iraqi taxi drivers.

"We expected it and are happy with it," Sha'lan Hameed said.

For nearly two weeks the ministry of oil and minerals has been telling Iraqis to rationalise on petrol and stop using it to wash their hands, dirty spare parts and utensils.

Filling up a car with petrol at the previous rate in Baghdad cost half the 25 dinar bill, the lowest denomination in circulation in Iraq's inflation-hit economy.

A taxi ride in Baghdad could cost a minimum of 1,000 dinars and Mr. Hameed said he made around 35,000 dinars a day. Under the new rate, he will have to pay 100 dinars to fill his car.

At current exchange rate Mr. Hameed would be making about $12 a day, double that of what a civil servant earns in a month.

EU ministers optimistic on economies, EMU on track

BRUSSELS (R) — European Union (EU) finance ministers expressed cautious optimism Monday that their flagging economies would revive in time to ensure the timely transition to a single currency.

At their first meeting of the new year, they also committed themselves to doing everything possible to reduce the high rate of joblessness within the EU, pressing for greater coordination among member states in alleviating what many see as Europe's main economic problem.

"The slowdown gives cause for concern ... but we will soon resume the path of sustained growth," said Acting Italian Prime Minister and Finance Minister Lamberto Dini.

Described as more of a "pause" than a harbinger of recession, the recent spate of data showing rising joblessness and waning economic confidence was not seen impeding progress towards economic and monetary union (EMU).

Moreover, the ministers stressed the need to avoid the growing public perception that the Maastricht treaty's tough rules on budget consolidation were behind the increase in unemployment.

"It is a mistake to claim that Maastricht is causing unemployment," said Belgium's Finance Minister Philippe Maystadt.

Nearly 11 per cent of Europe's workforce is unemployed, a situation that compares most unfavourably with other industrialised countries.

The need for further budget restaint, mostly through spending cuts, was considered essential for those wishing to qualify for a single currency by Jan. 1, 1999, its expected launch date.

"We have no other alternative than pursuing these consolidation policies," said Juergen Stark, Germany's secretary of state for finance, whose country's 1995 deficit was well above the threshold specified by the treaty.

Countries wishing to join EMU must bring their deficits down to three per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) by 1997, the year they will be judged for fitness. Germany's 1995 deficit stood at 3.6 per cent of GDP.

The ministers also pledged to speed up work on a budget stability pact for countries joining EMU and a framework for currency relations between those inside monetary union and those on the perimeter.

The meeting, which followed a gathering of Group of Seven finance ministers and central bankers in Paris Saturday, coincides with the European Commission's round table on EMU, a three-day brainstorming session designed to improve public awareness of a single currency.

Yet the commission's efforts, which bring together over 400 participants from business, government and consumer groups at a cost of nearly 1.0 billion ECU, has gotten off to a rough start.

Several prominent German participants declined to take part in the high profile event, and on Monday, Britain, clearly opposed to such a campaign, said it would not allow the commission to advertise the merits of EMU within its borders.

Britain's chancellor of the exchequer, Kenneth Clarke, said now was not the time for a public sales campaign on the merits of EMU.

Jordan Times
Tel: 684311/
699634

Oman cuts budget deficit

DUBAI (R) — Stronger oil and gas revenues coupled with subdued spending rises helped slash Oman's budget deficit by 23 per cent in the first 11 months of last year, official figures have showed.

Figures released by the Development Ministry showed the deficit shrank to 236.2 million riyals ($614 million) in the January-November 1995 period from 308.4 million riyals a year earlier.

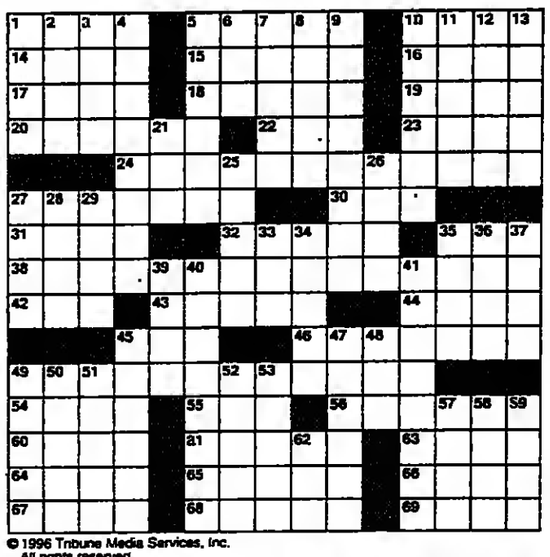
Early last year the government forecast a 312 million riyal 1995 deficit. For 1996, the deficit is projected at 218 million.

Oil revenues rose 5.8 per cent to 1.26 billion riyals in the 11 months to end-November 1995 from a previous 1.19 billion. At 55.9 million riyals, gas revenues in the period were 13 per cent stronger.

Oman's daily oil output is about 855,000 barrels. It has a multi-billion dollar gas development project and is due to start exports by the end of the century.

In the first 11 months of 1995, government spending was relatively stable, edging up 0.8 per cent to 1.89 billion riyals.

THE Daily Crossword by Stanley B. Whitten



ACROSS
1 Fellow
5 Chest wood
10 Snead and Donaldson
14 Places
15 Expiale
16 Type of bargain
17 Candid
18 Nocturnal lemur
19 Nobleman
20 Bleek
22 Adherent: suff.
23 Therefore
24 Steinbeck noval
27 Singer
30 Plaything
31 Assistant
32 Goose genus
35 Calendar abbr.
38 Trifle (with)
42 Male turkey
43 Pico de — (Sp. mount)
44 Skelched
45 Sandwich ordar
46 Order followers
49 Scholar
54 Grows older
55 Studant at 66A
56 Went without lood
60 Coupes
61 A Starr
63 First nama in mystery
64 Bee residence
65 E.A.P. name
66 Ivy League member
67 Wallet items
68 Ferm machinery pioneer
69 Masl

DOWN
1 Bumpkin
2 Pueblo Indian
3 Experts
4 Moola lor gewgaws
5 "— Madam"
6 Ike'a command
7 Architectural order
8 Parsley family member
9 Said differenlly
10 Fleel of foot
11 Waming
12 Combine
13 Drawing room
21 Astem
25 Mad
26 Standard
27 Mil. rank
28 Hawaiian seaport
29 Biblical progenitor
33 — Cole
34 Nose
35 Certain
36 Addict
37 Tidings
39 Dogie
40 Like a slag
41 Long, arduous treks
45 Supervises
47 Previous to
48 Period of note
49 Aggressive manliness
50 Once more
51 Brazenness
52 Omit in pronunciation
53 Suggestion
57 Snare
58 Scal lady
59 Bambi, e.g.
62 Needlefish

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Yesterday's puzzle solved:

R	O	B	E	S		F	A	R	M		S	L	A	B
A	T	R	E	E		A	L	A	I		H	O	P	E
S	T	A	R	A		L	E	I	S		R	O	S	E
P	O	I		W	I	S	E	N	H	E	I	M	E	R
		N	I	E	C	E			M	A	N			
M	I	S	S	E	S		S	T	A	C	K	S	U	P
A	N	T	E	D		S	T	A	S	H		M	I	A
S	L	O	E		P	E	A	C	H		S	A	N	G
T	A	R		T	R	A	C	K		H	A	R	T	E
S	Y	M	P	H	O	N	Y		T	A	R	T	A	R
			E	E	L			D	E	N	I	M		
K	N	O	W	N	O	T	H	I	N	G		O	L	D
E	A	S	T		N	O	O	N		A	N	N	I	E
P	U	L	E		G	O	N	E		R	E	E	V	E
I	T	O	R		S	L	E	D		S	T	Y	E	S

JUMBLE® THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

ARBOX

SQUET

CLUBEK

ETTORP

Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: (Answers tomorrow)

Yesterday's Jumbles: CRESS LINER MUSCLE COUSIN
Answer: What the rowing crew considered their strategic workout — A SCULL SESSION

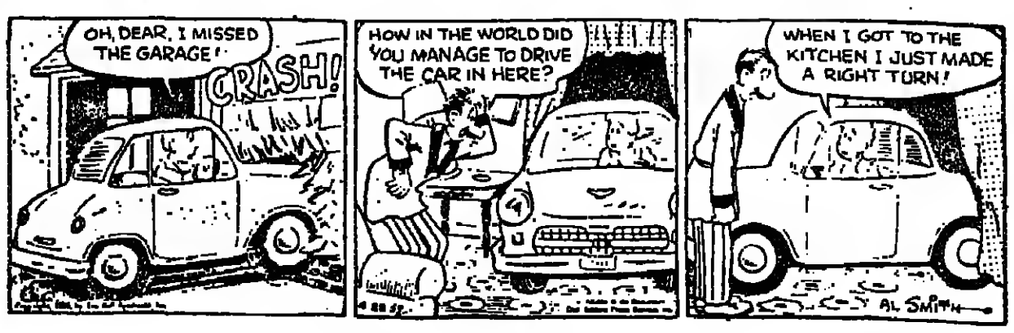
THE BETTER HALF® By Glasbergen

"The doctor says I'm suffering from job stress. My migraine has an ulcer and my ulcer has a migraine!"

Peanuts

Andy Capp

Mutt'n'Jeff



HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 1996

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Study your relationship with others today and then do whatever will improve it. Talk over your mutual aims.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) Although a partner may give you trouble, you find that fellow associates are very cooperative, so carry through with your ideas.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) Forget dull duties today and get your fine talents to the attention of those who can assist you most in promoting them.

MOON CHILDREN: (June 22 to July 21) Be more willing to do what kin desire of you and forget entertainment for the time being. Have guests over to your house for a friendly visit.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) Get out and do shopping and run errands which are important. Forget that easy chair and get busy. Make your future brighter.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) You are planning how to increase your assets today through better understanding with associates.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) Put aside that troublesome matter today and go after your personal desires and aims, and you will gain them.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) You can gain romantic and other personal pleasures today if you are not forceful with others. Listen carefully to others.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) There is little you can do about some situation today, so put it out of your mind. Plan for tonight more wisely.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Get into the business world today and show your finest talents. Forget your friends for a while and you will be very progressive.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) Take a friend along and go to some place of interest you have long wanted to see. Avoid a big-wig who does not know his own mind.

PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) Forget new interests and keep promises you have made today to others and clear your desk for new beginnings.

Birthstone of January: Garnet — Rose Quartz

Elissar Haydar-Tamim, supervisor of the floor market, Monday rings the bell which resumes operations at the Beirut Stock Exchange after a 13-year interruption due to the war in Lebanon.

Beirut bourse back in business

BEIRUT (R) — With the traditional ringing of a bell to open the session, the Beirut Stock Exchange (BSE) resumed trading Monday after a break of nearly 13 years caused by Lebanon's civil war.

Deputy trading floor chief Elissar Tamim rang the hand-held bell from the pre-war days of open outcry trading to announce the start of operations on the small, computerised trading floor set up by the Paris Bourse.

"It's a fine day today ... it's a good day. We are looking with great optimism on this step," declared acting Finance Minister Fouad Siniora visiting the floor as trading began.

"I hope the modest beginning that we are starting with is going to attract more and more people and companies into the stock exchange," Mr. Siniora said.

The government of billionaire Prime Minister Rafik Al Hariri sees the Beirut Stock Exchange as a key to the revival of Lebanon's capital markets and a future conduit for funds to flow into the country for national reconstruction.

But the restart with three listed shares was quiet compared with trading before the 1983 closure when 42 shares were listed and Beirut was the most active exchange in the Middle East.

Prices set at the fixing for the three shares — two cement companies and an industrial piping manufacturer — were in line with those on the Beirut grey market which has been active in the stocks for years.

Ciments Libanais, Lebanon's second biggest company, was fixed at $4.625 compared with $4.50-$4.60 on the grey market. Ciments Blancs was $6.875 ($6.75-$7.00) and industrial piping maker Eternit was $3.375 ($3.45-$3.50).

Officials said the five authorised brokerage houses received a total of 40-50 buy and sell orders and 14,720 shares worth a total $63,525 were traded.

"It's good as a starter," said trading floor chief Fouad Baalbaki.

"The prices and volume are realistic. I am very, very satisfied with the volume for the first day," said Nabil Aoun, president of the Beirut Stockbrokers Association and chairman of Fidus SAL, one of five brokerage houses.

But the volume was dwarfed by the revival Beirut secondary market, a privately-owned market under central bank supervision which only trades shares of Solidere, Lebanon's biggest company which is rebuilding war-shattered central Beirut.

Monday's trade in Solidere shares totalled $650,955 — 10 times the value of trade on the revived stock exchange.

However, BSE officials were heartened just before trading began by news that Solidere will move its share to the stock exchange in the spring when its agreement with the private market expires.

"We anticipate that we will do that sometime in May," Solidere Chairman Nasser Chamaa said. "We are now in discussions with the Beirut Stock Exchange to implement all these steps."

Solidere's shares will boost the stock exchange, adding $2 billion capitalisation to the total capitalisation of about $500 million of the three listed companies.

Mr. Chamaa's statement was the first official indication from Solidere that it would move to the official exchange. It has been traded on the Beirut secondary market since mid-1994.

Other additions to the stock exchange are expected shortly.

The famed Casino du Liban, preparing to reopen this year, says its shares will return to the market in a week or two.

Gold clears $400 barrier but future uncertain

LONDON (R) — Gold cleared the key $400 per ounce barrier Monday, but bullion analysts said it needs to show more strength to spark an extended bull market.

"It is not a closed book on gold. It is keeping us guessing a little but it definitely looks more solid," said Tony Warick-Ching, analyst at Commodities Research International.

Gold surged to fix on Monday morning at $402.65, the highest since August 1993 after a strong finish in New York on Friday. It fixed at $399.10 on Friday afternoon.

Gold briefly popped above the $400 benchmark level on Jan. 10 on heavy buying from U.S. investment funds but later retreated.

That was the first time it had broken $400 since the bull market of 1993, in which investors George Soros and James Goldsmith were the major players.

Monday's assault on the psychologically-important $400 mark was triggered by the New York finish over $399 and by positive comments on the stronger dollar from the Group of Seven (G-7) finance ministers meeting in Paris at the weekend.

The firming of the dollar since last year has boosted Japanese gold prices by several hundred yen, which prompted some profit-taking last week.

But after G-7 ministers said there was scope for further dollar strengthening, investors saw prospects for a further rally in domestic gold prices and began buying.

Japanese speculators were strong buyers of gold early Monday after selling initially on fears that a stronger dollar would provoke liquidation.

"That gold has risen into a dollar rally implies there is respectable strength behind the demand," said Mr. Warwick-Ching.

Technical analyst Elli Gifford, of Investment Research of Cambridge, said gold may ease back in the short-term since it was overbought, but long-term indicators were still bullish.

"I want to see it above $404," she said.

It met resistance Monday around $402.50 and London dealers said the $402-$403 level was crucial as there were many buy orders above there.

There had been few signs of selling by gold mining companies so far, a factor widely blamed last year for capping the price.

"It could mean the producers are taking a more detached view of the price," Mr. Warwick-Ching said.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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ORGANIZED MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR MONDAY 22/01/1996

COMPANY'S NAME	NO. OF SHARES TRADED	VALUE TRADED JD	PREV. CLOSING PRICE	CLOSING PRICE
ARAB BANK PLC	1420	354120	240.000	237.000
INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT BANK	6662	17565	2.630	2.650
JORDAN CHUP BANK	14350	15169	1.060	1.060
JORDAN ISLAMIC BANK	650	2412	3.720	3.710
JORDAN INVESTMENT & FINANCE BANK	1000	3530	3.530	3.530
BEIT ELMAL SAVINGS&INVESTMENT FOR HOUSING	500	1550	3.100	3.100
AMMAN BANK FOR INVESTMENT	6900	5934	.870	.860
BANKS SECTOR	31609	400551	INDEX NUMBER: 127.24 CHANGE : -0.02%	
GENERAL ARABIA INSURANCE	319641	926050	3.040	2.000
INSURANCE SECTOR	319751	927182	INDEX NUMBER: 129.20 CHANGE : 0.00%	
JORDANIAN ELECTRIC POWER	10500	18050	1.720	1.720
JORDAN NATIONAL SHIPPING LINES	106	268	2.580	2.530
MACHINERY EQUIP. RENTING & MAINTENANCE	1250	925	.700	.740
UNITED MIDDLE EAST & COMMODORE HOTELS	750	1613	2.200	2.150
ZARKA PRIVATE UNIVERSITY	900	1089	2.210	1.210
UNITED CO. FOR ORGANIZING LAND TRANS.	150	333	2.250	2.220
UNION LAND DEVELOPMENT CORP.	4150	4026	.080	.070
SERVICES SECTOR	17876	26345	INDEX NUMBER: 126.85 CHANGE : -0.43%	
THE JORDAN CEMENT FACTORIES	2000	7260	3.630	3.630
JORDAN PETROLEUM REFINARY	847	8427	9.950	9.950
WOOLEN INDUSTRIES	50	70	1.400	1.400
ARAB PHARMACEUTICAL MANUFACTURING	2511	11765	4.680	4.680
JORDAN CERAMIC INDUSTRIES	312	1901	6.130	6.100
RAFIA INDUSTRIES	1000	2153	2.150	2.150
DAR AL DAWA DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT	500	3575	7.150	7.150
ARAB ALUMINIUM INDUSTRY	5354	29192	5.350	5.450
LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	7500	4275	.580	.570
ARAB PAPER CONVERTING & TRADING	750	1058	1.410	1.410
NATIONAL STEEL INDUSTRY	4050	6735	1.610	1.680
NATIONAL INDUSTRIES	1463	1448	.000	.990
INTERMEDIATE PETRO-CHEMICAL INDUSTRIES	4050	6275	1.530	1.520
JORDAN ROCKWOOL INDUSTRIES	1200	1214	1.050	1.010
NATIONAL CABLE & WIRE MANUFACTURING	100	370	3.750	3.700
ARAB CENTER FOR PHARM. & CHEMICALS	550	935	1.720	1.700
JORDAN INDUSTRIAL RESOURCES CO.	7450	14165	1.900	1.900
JORDAN NEW-CABLE COMPANY	1700	1946	1.390	1.390
AL-ZAY READY WEAR MANUFACTURING CO.	2700	6102	2.250	2.260
INTERNATIONAL TOBACCO & CIGARETTES	2050	2792	1.360	1.370
UNION CHEMICAL & VEGATIABLE OIL INDUSTRI	2600	4108	1.560	1.580
INDUSTRIAL SECTOR	48487	116035	INDEX NUMBER: 122.40 CHANGE : +0.04%	
GRAND TOTAL	417672	1470102	INDEX NUMBER: 155.11 CHANGE : -0.47%	

NO. OF TRADED SHARES IN PARALLEL MARKET : 165425
VALUE TRADED IN PARALLEL MARKET : 135544

DAILY BUSINESS BEAT

A review of news from the Arabic press

Dweik expects TCC to earn JD 175 million this year

☆☆ TELECOMMUNICATIONS CORPORATION (TCC) Director-General Walid Dweik expects the corporation to earn JD 175 million this year. With JD 110 million to be transferred to the treasury, the TCC will be left with only JD 65 million in addition to loans and grants to cover capital expenditure and operating expenses. Since the beginning of the year, the TCC is enjoying financial and administrative independence and it has prepared a separate budget for its operations.

Mr. Dweik said the "national investment programme" which the TCC has started implementing would provide 300,000 new telephone lines across the country, including rural areas. Amman's share will be 125,000 lines, Mr. Dweik said, adding that the semi-automatic service currently in use in some rural parts of Jordan will be upgraded to fully-automatic service.

The TCC chief said that the existing telephone exchanges have a capacity for 350,000 lines but after the national programme is completed by 1998 the capacity will increase to 650,000 lines. Other expansions over the next three years based on capital expenditure will bring the overall number of telephone lines in Jordan to 700,000 lines.

Meanwhile, the minister of communications urged traders and importers to save themselves the time, the effort and the money by not importing used equipment to the communications sector. He said that the commission for organising the communications sector has absolutely banned the import of used or repaired telephones, exchanges, faxes and other communication equipment to protect the network and exchanges of the TCC and the interests of the public. "The commission will not allow the Jordanian market to become a scrap dump for the world's used phones," the minister stressed. He said instruction were issued to the customs department and the free zones not to allow such equipment to be brought to Jordan (Al Dustour).

Orphans' Fund conducts 1,562 profit-sharing deals for JD 4.5 m

☆☆ TOTAL DEPOSITS at the Orphans' Fund at the end of last year amounted to JD 36.14 million, of which JD 32.60 million were deposits in the East Bank. The fund dealt with 1,562 profit-sharing transactions for a total volume of JD 4.48 million of which JD 1.88 million were conducted in Amman. Most of the profit-sharing deals were in the trade of building materials. Such deals stood at 655, involving JD 2.29 million. The fund distributed dividends at a rate of 7.4 per cent for the 1994/95 fiscal year (Al Dustour).

Clothing factory in Irbid to be first Jordanian-Israel venture

☆☆ THE TRADE agreement between Jordan and Israel will become effective from the beginning of February after passing through all legal stages, the secretary-general of the Ministry of Industry and Trade said. He pointed out that the maiden joint venture between the two countries would be a clothing factory in Irbid. This joint venture, which will employ 300 workers, will export goods as being a joint product (Al Dustour).

22 hotels are under construction

☆☆ THE NUMBER of hotel projects under construction by the end of last year throughout the Kingdom was 22, costing JD 96 million. The number in Amman was 13 hotels at a cost of JD 57.5 million. Of the 13, three will carry 5-star classification and will cost JD 10 million each. Another 4-star hotel will cost JD 10 million, whereas two 3-star hotels will cost JD 9.5 million each. In Wadi Mousa, five hotels are under construction for a total cost of JD 26 million. Other hotels are under construction in Karak, Zai, Ajloun, Aqaba, Tafileh and southern Shouneh (Al Aswaq).

Financial Markets

Jordan Times in co-operation with Cairo Amman Bank

Eurocurrency Interest Rates — Date: 22/1/1996

Currency	1 MTH	3 MTHS	6 MTHS	12 MTHS
U.S. Dollar	5.31	5.16	5.12	4.93
Sterling Pound	6.06	6.00	5.87	5.87
Deutsche Mark	3.38	3.25	3.12	3.18
Swiss Franc	1.44	1.44	1.44	1.44
French Franc	4.50	4.50	4.50	4.35
Japanese Yen	0.25	0.31	0.37	0.43
European Currency Unit	4.73	4.62	4.50	4.47

Interbank Mid rates for amounts exceeding U.S. Dollars 1,000,000 or equivalent.

Precious Metals — Date: 22/1/1996

Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm*	Metal	USD/Oz	JD/Gm
Gold	400.95	7.50	Silver	5.49	0.100

* 21 Karat

Central Bank of Jordan Exchange Rate Bulletin — Date: 22/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
U.S. Dollar	0.7050	0.7100
Sterling Pound	1.0662	1.0715
Deutsche Mark	0.4762	0.4786
Swiss Franc	0.5913	0.5943
French Franc	0.1397	0.1404
Japanese Yen*	0.6682	0.6715
Dutch Guilder	0.4254	0.4275
Swedish Krona	******	******
Italian Lira*	0.0446	0.0448
Belgian Franc	******	******

* For 100

Other Currencies — Date: 22/1/1996

Currency	Bid	Offer
Bahraini Dinar	1.8620	1.8780
Lebanese Lira*	0.044250	0.04465
Saudi Riyal	0.1870	0.1898
Kuwaiti Dinar	2.3070	2.3670
Qatari Riyal	0.1932	0.1945
Egyptian Pound	0.2100	0.2200
Omani Riyal	1.8330	1.8410
UAE Dirham	0.1922	0.1935
Greek Drachma*	0.2785	0.3035
Cyprist Pound	1.4865	1.5465

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JORDAN MARKETPLACE

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African Nations Cup

Seeds start to justify their ranking

JOHANNESBURG (R) — After a jittery start to the African Nations' Cup finals for several of the pre-tournament seeds, the competition is being to follow the formbook.

With one round of group matches still to be played, the likes of Cameroon, the Ivory Coast and Zambia have recovered from stuttering starts to line themselves up for quarter-final berths.

Favourites Ghana, who have won the Nations' Cup four times, and the hosts South Africa have also verified their seedings with a 100 per cent record after the opening two rounds of group matches.

Zaire are the only seeded team with their backs to the wall when the tournament resumes after two rest days on Wednesday.

Cameroon, humiliated in the opening match of the competition last week, when they were beaten 3-0 by South Africa, bounced back to beat Egypt 2-1 and now have just to edge out newcomers Angola in their last Group A match to go through to the quarter-finals.

The ivory coast also recovered from defeat in their first game to win a hard-fought encounter against Mozambique in port Elizabeth on Sunday.

They now only need a draw in their final Group D match against Tunisia on Thursday to reach the Nations' Cup quarter-finals for the third successive tournament.

Zambia, beaten finalists at the last Nations Cup in Tunisia in 1994, returned to form on the weekend with a 5-1 thrashing of Burkina Faso in Bloemfontein.

The win was just one goal short of the record winning margin in the Nations' Cup finals — set by the Ivory Coast in 1970 when they beat Ethiopia 6-1.

Zambia, top seeds in Group B, need only one point from their game against Sierra Leone in Bloemfontein on Wednesday to secure a place in the final eight.

Zaire have to beat Liberia in Johannesburg on Thursday if they are to justify their seeding in Group C.

The Leopards must win by two goals to eliminateGeorge Weah's team from the tournament.

$200,000 raised for football soccer: A dinner hosted by a television company, a newspaper and a drinks company raised more than 700,000 rand (about $200,000) for football development in South Africa, and the national team, currently playing in football's African National Cup.

Weah wants photo with Mandela: A big ambition of George Weah at the African National Cup has nothing to do with football. Liberia's 1995 world footballer of the year wants a picture of Nelson Mandela with his national football team, according to Johannesburg weekly Mail and Guardian on Friday. "Mandela," Weah was quoted as saying, "is a symbol of peace and freedom. It would do a lot of good in my country if this picture could hang on every wall."

The head of the Tunisian delegation at the African Nations Cup was banned from the changing rooms and and touchline of their next match for offensive remarks.

Nasser Benhassine has been punished by the African Federation (CAF) for vulgar and offensive comments towards CAF and the referee when Tunisia lost 2-1 to Ghana.

Benhassine's suspension is for Tunisia's last group match against Ivory Coast here on Thursday.

He heavily criticised the South African referee Petros Mathebela for not giving Tunisia what he believed were two penalties. Tunisia now have just one point from two matches and will need to beat Ivory Coast to make the quarter-finals.

CAF has also given the Tunisian delegation a firm caution for unsporting behaviour during the match.

'Weah denies quitting reports': Liberian general manager Jacques Andeson said on Monday team captain George Weah had denied remarks attributed to him tht he would quit the Liberian team at the end of the African Nations Cup.

Weah was reported to have said he was considering walking out because of lack of support given to the team by Liberian Football authorities.

Anderson said Weah had received a fax message at the team's hotel in Durban on Friday with a copy of the report in question which had appeared in one of the local newspapers in Liberia.

"Weah immediately brought it to me for me to read," said Anderson, "and denied that he had ever made those remarks."

"He was upset and we reported the situation to the Liberian youth and sports minister, Francois Massaquoi, who is with the team delegation here in Durban.

"He (Massaquoi) was also perturbed that the report might be the cause of chaotic situation in Monrovia and he placed two telephone calls to local radio stations in Liberia refuting the report and the remarks attributed to George."

Weah's reported remarks were: "If the conditions don't change then I am resigning from the Liberian side and I have already told the officials and coaches that."

"For the team to improve it must have better facilities. We can't go on like this. It's not just a question of finance. It's everything. Government money would help support a better team."

Stronger family ties from football: One benefit of the African Nations Cup is that it is bringing families closer together, according to Johannesburg's Sunday Times newspaper.

Dipuo Mokgotsi, a Soweto housewife, says her husband races back from work each day to catch the evening match.

"Children are seeing their fathers, and wives are spending time with their husbands," she said.

Saudis miss World Cup hero in Asian soccer qualifiers

HONG KONG (AFP) — Saudi Arabia have cast their best known player into the soccer desert, clouding their campaign starting next week to regain the top spot in Asian football.

The Saudis start their Asia Cup qualifying group matches on Wednesday without Saeed Owairan who has been banned for life from the national team by the Saudi federation for "disciplinary reasons."

Owairan, a 28-year-old former Asian Player of the Year, scored one of the finest goals seen in the World Cup at the end of a 70-yard slalom through the Belgian team at the U.S. finals in 1994.

But a taste for the good life has cost Owairan several suspensions for his club Al Shabab and now seems set to rule him out of football altogether.

The midfielder was deemed to have gone to far at a national training camp in Jeddah earlier this month.

Brazilian coach Jose Mario gave the Saudi players a 1:00 a.m. curfew which Owairan missed by nine hours.

Owairan will not be allowed to leave the country for the next year, during which he will also be banned from playing for Al Shabab.

Owairan will at least be able to see his former teammates open their Asia Cup campaign when they entertain Kyrgyzstan next Wednesday.

Even without Owairan, Saudi Arabia look too good for Kyrgyzstan and Yemen in the group nine race to qualify for the finals of the competition held ever four years.

Thirty-five countries have been split into 10 groups to find the teams for the next finals in the United Arab Emirates next December. The UAE qualify as hosts and Japan will go as defending champions, having beaten Saudi Arabia in the 1992 final in Hiroshima.

The Saudis, Asia Cup winners in 1984 and 1988, only started a fully professional league in 1992 but took international observers by storm with their skill at the 1994 World Cup finals where they reached the second phase.

Under Jose Mario they have developed a strong and experienced squad built around goalkeeper Mohammad Al Dayaie, defenders Mohammad Khlaiwi and Ahmad Jamil, midfielder Fuad Anwar Amin and striker Sami Al Jaber.

South Korea, Asia's other representatives at the last World Cup, should also have no problem Chinese Taipie, Vietnam and Pacific minnows Micronesia in group one, which will be held in August in Vietnam.

In group two, Hong Kong will be looking to repeat their famous victory over China in the World Cup qualifying rounds in 1986 that led to riots in Beijing.

They will host China, the Philippines and Macau in Hong Kong from January 30 to February 4.

In group three, Thailand, winners of the Southeast Asian Games soccer title last month, should be too strong for Singapore, the Maldives and Burma. But group four will be more closely contested between Malaysia, Indonesia and India.

Malaysia's French coach Claude Le Roy quit this week follow the country's bad performance at the SEA Games, having lasted less than a year. Officials admit it will be a handicap.

India are now coached by Rustam Akramov, who steered Uzbekistan to the 1994 Asian Games gold medal. Indonesia's young side are spearheaded by striker Kurniawan Dwi Yulianto, who plays for Swiss side Lucerne.

Group five contains Iran, who won the Asia Cup in 1968, 1972 and 1976 before the Islamic revolution and then war with Iraq threw the country's sport into chaos. They are up against Sri Lanka, Oman and Nepal.

Iraq start as favourites in group six but could be challenged by Bangladesh, now coached by German Otto Pfister, who steered Ghana to victory in the 1991 world under 17 championship.

Qatar, Syria and Kazakhstan are in group seven and Uzebekistan are favourites in group eight with Bahrain and Tajikistan.

Group 10 could see a clash between 1980 Asian champions Kuwait and Lebanon, now coached by former Wales player and manager Terry Yorath.

All the qualifying groups must be finished by August.

Becker faces Kafelnikov at Australian Open

MELBOURNE (Agencies) — Boris Becker faces brash Russian Yevgeny Kafelnikov in the Australian Open quarter-finals, after dismissing New Zealander Brett Steven here late Monday.

The German fourth seed, who became world No. 1 for the first time when he won the Australian crown in 1991, had a rocky beginning before mastering Steven 1-6, 6-4, 6-3, 6-2 in two hours 16 minutes.

Steven, ranked 37, got off to a flyer in the night match on centre court, rocking Becker back on his heels with two service breaks in the opening set to take a 5-0 lead before Becket held his service in the sixth game.

Becker endeared himself to the crowd when he pointed one finger to the heavens to signal his relief at his breakthrough.

Meanwhile, Swedish seventh seed Thomas Enqvist cruised ioto the last eight but the event's young giantkiller, Mark Philippoussis, will not be there to meet bim after crashing back to Earth.

As Enqvist booked his quarter-final berth with an easy straight-sets win over Italian Renzo Furlan, the 19-year-old Philippoussis, who two days ago pulled off a stunning upset against world number one Pete Sampras, took an ugly hammering.

The tall Australian's hometown crowd at the Flinders Park centre court groaned in disappointment and embarrassment as their hero of Saturday night suffered a nightmare loss at the hands of compatriot Mark Woodforde 6-2, 6-2, 6-2.

Philippoussis, nicknamed "Scud" for his missile-like serves and ground strokes, backfired badly, repeatedly hitting balls way over the baseline, netting simple volleys and allowing his smaller, wily opponent to run him around the court.

"Things did not go too well from the start and I found it difficult to get pumped up," said the 40th-ranked Philippoussis, whose win over Sampras raised Australian hopes for its first Grand Slam champion in almost a decade.

Woodforde, a 30-year-old doubles specialist, next meets in-form Enqvist who blew away 38th-ranked Furlan 7-5, 6-0, 6-3 with the Swede reeling off 14 straight games in a purple patch he himself described as "unbelievable" tennis.

Enqvist, who has rocketed from 60 to seven in world rankings over the past 12 months, said every shot he hit in the 14-game blitz went in.

"So I'm very happy," said the 21-year-old Enqvist who has taken over the mantle of number one Swede from Stefan Edberg.

Enqvist and Woodforde followed world number two Andre Agassi, eighth seed Jim Courier, fifth seed Michael Chang, sixth seed Yevgeny Kafelnikov and lowly ranked Swede Mikhael Tillstrom into the quarter finals.

Tillstrom, ranked 105th, beat third seed Thomas Muster in a major centre court upset on Sunday.

A tearful Woodforde, through to his first Grand Slam quarter-final in 12 years on the circuit, told a news conference he could not believe the achievement came so late in his career.

"It was a very special moment," Woodforde said. "Hopefully in my next round I won't feel the letdown that Mark Philippoussis experienced," he added.

Russia's Kafelnikov, heartened by the shock exit of Sampras, staked his claim to a first Grand Slam title on Monday with a three-sets demolition of American Malivai Washington.

Kafelnikov, who faces a likely quarter-final showdown with Becker, said Sampras' exit meant there was now no one left in the tournament he had not beaten.

"Everyone else I have beaten so why can't I win the Australian Open," the 21-year-old said. "I feel like I really can win this one. I feel it," he added.

Agassi will take the world's top ranking if he beats compatriot Courier on Tuesday. If Courier wins, it will default to Muster.

But Kafelnikov said he too aspired to hold the number one ranking. "I would like to get to number one spot, even for one week. That's my goal," he told reporters.

Martina Hingis jubilates after advancing to the quarterfinals of the Australian Open (Reuters photo)

Germany's Boris Becker argues with the umpire over a line call during the first set of his match against New Zealand's Brett Steven at the Australian Open (Reuters photo)

Hingis through to quarters

Swiss teenage prodigy Martina Hingis upset the script at the Australian Open on Monday with a light-hearted demolition of 11th seed Brenda Schultz-McCarthy.

Unseeded Hingis, who even served underarm at one stge, reached her first Grand Slam quarter-final, becoming the youngest women to achieve the feat in Australian Open history.

Hingis, 15, obviously enjoyed herself in beating her Dutch opponent 6-1, 6-4 in 59 minutes on centre court to provide the day's only surprise in the fourth-round of the women's draw at Flinders Park.

Second seed Conchita Martinez of Spain, eighth-seeded German Anke Huber and South African Amanda Coetzer, seeded 16, all progressed to the last eight with comfortable straight set wins.

Hingis, who smiled and giggled throughout her match, joined fellow teenagers Iva Majoli of Croatia and American Chanda Rubin in the quarter-finals as the younger generation issued their challenge to American top seed Monica Seles.

Schultz-McCarthy, the only seed to fall on Monday, showed little resistance despite hitting the fastest serve ever recorded in a women's tournament — a 196 kph delivery.

In sharp contrast, Hingis tried to trick her opponent with a gentle underarm serve at 5-1 in the first set.

"She was standing maybe three metres behind the baseline, so it was fun," said Hingis, whose cheeky tactic failed to win her the point.

Brenda Schultz-McCarthy of the Netherlands smashes a forehand against Switzerland's Martina Hingis during their fourth round match at the Australian Open (Reuters photo)

"I played very well," said Hingis, who eclipsed the record of American Jennifer Capriati, a quarter-finalist here in 1992 two months before her 16th birthday.

"I did not make many mistakes and I kept the pressure on her," said Hingis, who turn 16 in September.

Schultz-McCarthy, a relative veteran at the age of 25 and a friend of Hingis, was not upset by her opponent's quirky serve. "She's just a little girl and she is enjoying her tennis. It's just fun for her," said Schultz-McCarthy.

Martinez had surprisingly little difficulty in overwhelming American tenth seed Lindsay Davenport 6-3, 6-1 in an earlier match on centre court.

Davenport, a losing finalist against Seles at the Peters International Tournament in Sydney eight days ago, failed to cope with a succession of a sliced shots by Martinez, ranked number two behind joint number ones Seles and Germany's Steffi Graf.

"I was moving her around with my slice and she made some mistakes," said Martinez, who will meet Huber for a place in the semifinals.

Huber booked her passage with a comfortable 6-3, 6-2 victory over unseeded Austrian Barbara Scheit.

Coetzer, who has rebuilt her game over the past two years in a bid to compete with a new band of hard-hitting teenagers, reaped the reward by reaching her second grand Slam quarter-final.

Coetzer defeated Russian Elena Likhovtseva 6-3, 6-3 to equal her achievement at the U.S. Open two years ago and set up a meeting with Hingis.

Courier fined $1,000

World number eight Jim Courier has finally paid for his sins at the Australian Open with officials fining him $1,000 on Monday for swearing.

The American, who escaped a fine for swearing in his second-round match against quick-tempered fellow American Jeff Tarango, was finally caught out on Sunday for an outburst in his fourth-round match against South African Marcos Ondruska.

Courier, cited for a verbal obscenity on his way to losing the third set, finally beat Ondruska in a thrilling five sets.

Last week, Courier admitted he used foul language in a second-match against Tarango, who is renowned for his on-court petulance after walking out of a game at Wimbledon last year.

Tarango, unhappy with his image as the "bad boy" of tennis, provocatively challenged the chair umpire in that match to cite Courier for swearing.

"I made a comment underneath my breath that apparently was a little louder than I thought because Jeff heard it," Courier told reporters after the Tarango match.

"The chair umpire didn't say anything and it was something I shouldn't have said... I don't expect to be always happy on court, trying to control it."

Courier on Tuesday meets world number two Andre Agassi who has twice fallen foul of open officials for swearing during the tournament and had to fork out a total $2,500.

Agassi was fined $1,000 last Friday for swearing during his third-round victory over fellow American Steve Bryan to add to a $1,500 fine for an earlier obscenity in his match against over compatriot Vince Spadea.

Agassi one win away from top ranking

Defending champion Andre Agassi will have more than the Australian Open title in his sights on Tuesday when a complicated three-way battle for the world's number one ranking will finally be settled.

Agassi will assume the mantle of the world's best player by beating fellow American Jim Courier in a quarter-final match at Flinders Park on Tuesday.

But the flamboyant Las Vegan has made his priorities perfectly clear this week, telling reporters after his fourth round victory over Sweden's Jonas Bjorkman: "If I don't win this tournament, I don't want to be ranked number one."

If the current world number two loses to Courier, his wish will be more than fulfilled. Indeed, a defeat against his Davis Cup teammate will mean a demotion for Agassi.

By losing, Agassi will fall one place in the rankings to number three, leaving Austrian Thomas Muster at the top of the pile, ahead of American Pete Sampras, after going into the tournament at number three.

Such an outcome would complete a remarkable transformation in the ranking during the year's first Grand Slam tournament.

Sampras arrived in Melbourne as the world number one but surrendered his position with a shock third-round exit to unseeded Australian teenager Mark Philippoussis on Saturday night.

Muster, the French Open champion, nominally moved into top spot after Sampras defeat only to lose against unseeded Swede Mikael Tillstrom on Sunday.

Sampras held the number one ranking for 10 weeks after recapturing the position from Agassi in November last year.

The various scenarios result from a complex ranking system that offers points in relation to a tournament's importance and the quality of opponents.

The system, which also revolves around a player's performance each week in relation to their effort in the corresponding period the previous year, has attracted much criticism.

"I've always had complaints about the ranking system," said Agassi, who believes clay-court specialist Muster is yet to prove himself a worthy number one until he wins some major tournaments away from his specialist surface.

It's a view shared by Courier, who believes Muster's domination during the European clay-court season last year will elevate him to a false position under the current system.

"The record books will show who's number one come the end of the year, and who's number one between now and then is merely what the computer says and not what the players feel," Courier said.

TODAY AT

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CINEMA PLAZA TEL: 699238
POCAHONTAS
Shows: 12:30, 2:15 p.m.
Sylvester Stallone....in
JUDGE DREDD
Shows: 6:45, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA CONCORD TEL: 677420
CONCORD "1"
* ACE VENTURA "2"
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6, 8:30, 10:30
CONCORD "2"
* Batman Forever
Shows: 3:30
* DISCLOSURE
Shows: 5:30

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The Woman that Shook the Throne of Egypt
Show: 6:30, 8:30, 10:30
The Lion King
Show: 12:30, 3:30, 5

Nabil & Hisham's Theatre TEL: 625155
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Welcome Normalisation
Shows: 8:30 p.m.
For reservation call 625155

SPORTS IN BRIEF

Romania ban 4 over doping

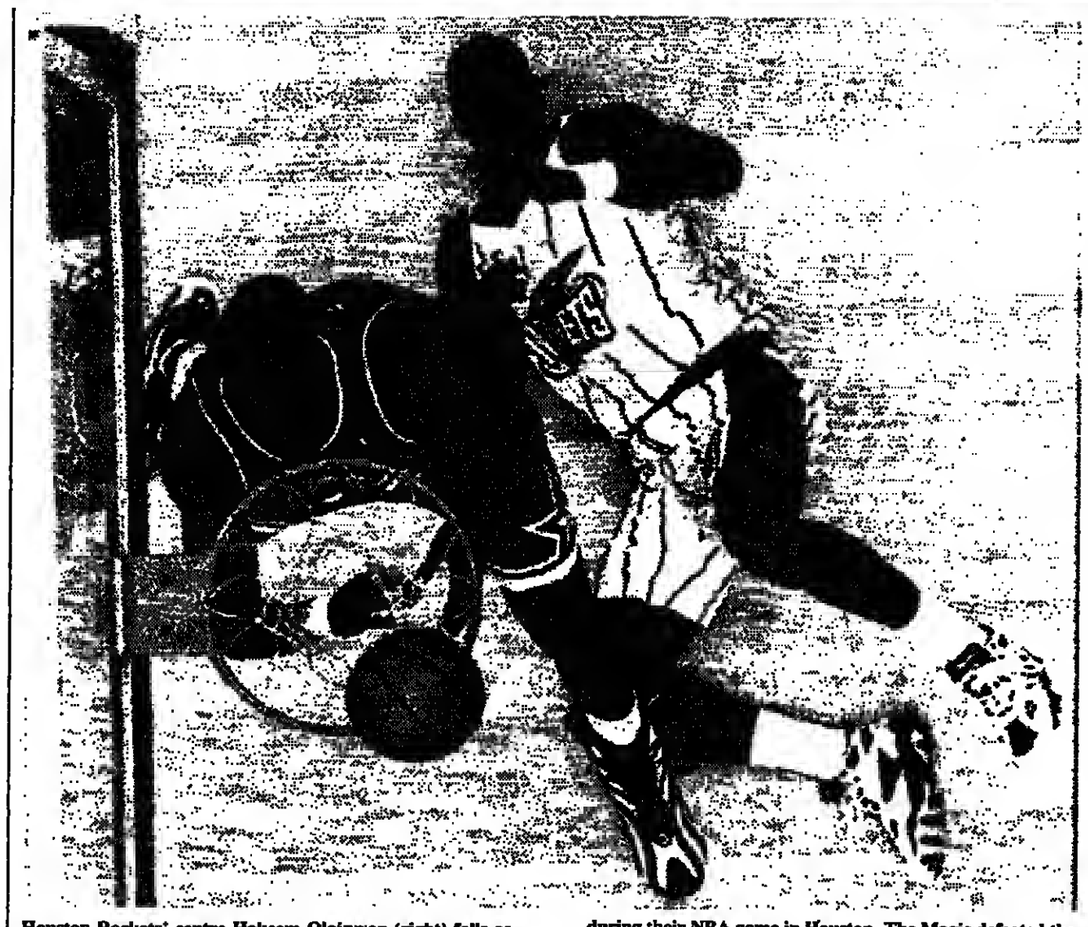
BUCHAREST (R) — The Romanian weightlifting federation said on Monday it had banned four athletes from all competition for two years after failing doping tests. "Nicolae Nita and Constantin Udrea from Steaua Bucharest, Marcel Socaciu from C.S.M. Cluj and Alexandru Dumitru from Rapid Bucharst will not be allowed to take part in any domestic or international competitions over the next two years," federation general secretary Lazar Baroga told Reuters. Two others Romanian lifters were banned for doping last year. The latest quartet are in the second tier of the country's middleweight lifters but might bave been expected to compete for the country in the Atlanta Olympics. The federation did not say wbat sort of drugs were involved.

Owners ponder global draft

LOS ANGELES (AFP) — Major League Baseball owners, trapped into bidding wars with a growing number of international players, are considering a worldwide talent draft. The move was discussed at owners meetings here and could be ready in time for this year's free agent draft. Japan's Hideo Nomo took advantage of his status to sign a two million-dollar contract with the Los Angeles Dodgers last year. His National League Rookie of the Year success sent US scouts flocking to Japan to seek talent. Last week, Cuban defector pitchers Livan Hernandez and Osvaldo Fernandez signed rich deals with major league clubs. Fernandez signed a $3.2 million deal for the three years with San Francisco while Florida landed Hernandez for four years for $4.5 million.

Christie in Australian races

SYDNEY (R) — British Olympic sprint champion Linford Christie has agreed to race in track meetings in the Australian cities of Adelaide and Perth this week, Athletics Australia officials said on Monday. Athletics Australia executive director Neil King told reporters the 1992 Olympic gold medallist will compete in an athletics Grand Prix series in Adelaide on Friday and Perth on Sunday. Christie and world champion bnrdler Colin Jackson of Wales bave been training in Sydney since last month to escape the European winter. King said Christie bad accepted the invitation to race in the 100 metres spirit in the Grand Prix series in order to test how well bis training had progressed while in Australia. Jackson and 5000 metres cbampion Sonia O'Sullivan had already agreed to compete in the Australian National championships in Sydney from March 7 and anther lesser event in Melbourne on February 29. An Athletics Australia spokesman said Jackson will also compete in the Adelaide and Perth meetings. Along witb Christie and Jackson, the Grand Prix series will also feature Australian women's world record pole vaulter Emma George and Kenyan 3000 metre runner Paul Bitok. Earlier this month Christie announced be would not defend bis Olympic 100 metres title at the Atlanta Olympics this year.



Houston Rockets' centre Hakeem Olajnwon (right) falls as Orlando Magic centre Shaquille O'Neal grabs a rebound during their NBA game in Houston. The Magic defeated the Rockets 97-96 (Reuters photo)

Bulls win 11th consecutive match; Suns snap 4-game losing streak

DETROIT (R) — Michael Jordan scored 12 of his 36 points during a decisive second quarter spurt as the Chicago Bulls kept pace with NBA excellence with their 11th straight win, 111-96 over the Detroit Pistons on Sunday.

Scottie Pippen added 22 points as Chicago improved to 34-3.

The Bulls, off to their best start in team history, need five more wins to equal the 39-3 start by the 1971-72 Los Angeles Lakers.

"All this means is we're off to a good start," Jordan said. "We're no a great team yet. Let's see bow we finish first. To call us a great team now is thinking way ahead. We haven't done anything yet."

Jordan had his seventh-straight 30-plus game.

In Houston, Shaquille O'Neal scored 29 points, including a layup with four seconds left, and blocked the potential game-winning shot as the Orlando Magic edged the Houston Rockets, 97-96.

Penny Hardaway scored 28 points and O'Neal added 16 for tbe Magic.

Hakeem Olajuwon finished with 30 points for Houston.

At Indiana, Rik Smits scored 16 of his 24 points in the first quarter and Reggie Miller added 23 points as the Indiana Pacers beat the Washington Bullets, 106-96.

Gheorghe Muresan's three-point play with 8:55 remaining pulled the Bullets within 88-84, but the Pacers used an 8-0 spurt, capped by Miller's two free tbrows, for a 96-84 lead with 5:56 left.

"We kind of hung on," Packers coach Larry Brown said. "We were a little impatient offensively, especially Rik. I thought he could have got better shots than he did."

In Philadelphia, David Robinson scored 23 points and Brad Lohaus added 18 as the San Antonio Spurs handed tbe Philadelphia 76ers their fifth straight loss, 118-88.

Robinson, who was 10-of-12 from the floor, grabbed eight rebounds for the Spurs, who snapped a two game losing streak.

Jerry Stackhouse scored 20 points and Clarence Weatherspoon added 17 and 15 rebounds for Philadelphia, which has dropped 13 of its last 15.

In Portland, James Robinson scored a season-high 22 points and made two three-pointers in a fourth-quarter run as the Portland Trail Blazers rallied to defeat the Cleaveland Cavaliers, 88-81.

Portland won for the eighth time in 10 games.

Danny Ferry scored 20 of his career-high 29 points in the second half and Terrell Brandon added 25 for Cleveland, which wrapped up a seven-game road trip at 3-4.

In Seattle, Gary Payton scored a season-high 29 points and Shawn Kemp added 26 as the Seattle Supersonics eased past the Dallas Mavericks, 108-101, for their fourth victory in five games.

George McCloud scored 26 points and Jason Kidd added 22 for Dallas.

"It was a lousy game. I tbought we stunk," said Seattle coach George Karl. "I didn't think we were responsible. I think it was one of the worst wins we've had."

In Phoenix, Charles Barkley had 22 points and 13 rebounds in his first game since a toe operation two weeks ago as the Phoenix Suns defeated the Sacramento Kings, 111-97, for their first victory under new coach Cotton Fitzsimmons.

Barkley played 28 minutes for the Suns, who also regained the services of point guard Kevin Johnson and snapped a four-game losing streak.

In Toronto, Damon Stoudamire scored eight of his 23 points in a game-ending 10-2 run, including the game-winning 14-foot baseline jumper with 11 seconds left, as the Toronto Raptors edged the Boston Celtics, 97-95.

Rick Fox had 20 points and 10 rebounds and Radja added 17 and 14 for the Celtics, who have lost five of their last six games.

RESULTS

Chicago	111	Detroit	96
Toronto	97	Boston	95
Orlando	97	Houston	96
Indiana	106	Washington	96
San Antonio	118	Philadelphia	88
Seattle	108	Dallas	101
Phoenix	111	Sacramento	97
Portland	88	Cleveland	81

European Figure Skating Championships

Russians dominate men's qualifying

SOFIA (R) — Russia, depleted by the late withdrawal of Olympic champion Alexei Urmanov, dominated qualifying for the men's event as the European Figure Skating Championships began in a low key on Sunday.

Urmanov withdrew earlier ion the weekend because of conjunctivitis but is expected to be fit for the World Championships in Edmonton, Alberta, in March.

Urmanov's absence deprives Russia of one of their top gold medal hopes even though Ilya Kulik is back to defend his title.

Kulik, who won spectacularly on his debut last year at the age of 17, flopped at the subsequent World Championships where he finished only ninth.

He will have to show more of his European Championship form and less of his World Championship nerves if he is to keep his title this week.

Kulik was jonied in the main event by compatriots Igor Pashkevich and 15-year-old world junior champion Alexei Yagudin, who finished first and second in their qualifying group.

Pashkevich has never made an impact at world level while Yagudin appears to have the jumps but not the style to be a contender yet.

Kulik was among seven skaters who were exempt from qualifying because they finished in the top 10 last year.

But 25 skaters went through their free programmes in two qualifying groups for the remaining 23 places in the starting field of 30 in the main event on Wednesday.

All 12 from the group led by the two Russians qualified while 11 from the second group of 13 also went through.

The policy, which has been criticised by many coaches, of holding two groups to eliminate as few as two skaters was defended by Sally-Anne Stapleford of Britain, who chairs the International Skating Union's technical committee.

"The rules state clearly there can only be 30 in the main event so we had to eliminate two," she said.

Asked why the group of 12 had to skate when all were assured of advancing, she replied: "Because it would not be fair to the skaters in the other group to ask them to skate and it would also mean too many skaters having byes."

Urmanov was joined on the sidelines by Russia's former world pairs champions Evgenia Shishkova and Vadim Naumov, who withdrew because Shiskova has flu.

Another pairs skater, Jelena Bereznaia of Latvia, is also absent, still recovering from a nasty head injury inflicted by the skate of her partner, Oleg Shliakhov, in practice 11 days ago.

She is reported to be making good progress but her participation in other events this season is in doubt.

GOREN BRIDGE

WITH OMAR SHARIF & TANNAH HIRSCH

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LISTEN FOR THE LEAD

North-South vulnerable. West deals.

NORTH
♠ A K Q J 8
♡ K J 7
◇ K J 5
♣ 6 3

WEST
♠ 10 2
♡ A Q 3 2
◇ 8 8 8 2
♣ A Q 9

EAST
♠ 9 4 3
♡ 9 8
◇ 10 7 4 3
♣ K J 7 5

SOUTH
♠ 8 7 5
♡ 10 6 5 4
◇ A Q
♣ 10 8 4 2

The bidding:

WEST	NORTH	EAST	SOUTH
1◇	Dbl	Pass	1♡
Pass	2♠	Pass	2NT
Pass	3NT	Pass	Pass
Pass			

Opening lead: Ace of ♡

When defending against a notrump game, the textbook lead is fourth best from your longest and strongest suit. However, there are times when it is wise to forget about this maxim. One snch occasion is when you expect that declarer might be able to run nine tricks in a hurry.

With three-card support and a ruffing value, we would have preferred e raise to three epades at South's second turn. With a favorable heart position, t0 tricks would not hava presented any problem. However, we venture to suggest that three no trump would have succeeded more often that not.

Sitting West was one of our favorite bridge stars, Christian Mari of Paris. He was afraid that a passive lead would give declarer the nioth trick, and so chose to attack instead by leading the ace of hearts, a lead which, despite appearances, did not rate to coet.

When dummy appeared, the shift was obvious. East could have no more than three or four points. If those points consisted of the ace of dinmonds, it was unlikely that the contract was going to be defeated. The only hope was that East he|d the king of clubs, either together with the jack or with some length. Mari shifted promptly to the ace, queen and nine of clnbs, and the defenders had raked in five tricks before declarer could even get started.

CONCACAF Gold Cup

Mexico stun Brazil in final

LOS ANGELES (R) — Mexico stunned Brazil on Sunday, beating the young heirs to the world champions 2-0 to win the CONCACAF Gold Cup.

Spectacular individualist goals Luis Garcia and Cuauhtemoc Blanco in the second half highlighted a superb performance by the Mexican who dominated the match on a rain-sodden coliseum pitch that stunted Brazil's extrovert skills.

The Brazilians, who fielded basically their under-23 team for the tournament, were reduced to 10 men for the last 10 minutes after defender Andre Luis was sent-off for receiving a second yellow card.

In the earlier third-place match, the United States, led by a goal from all-time American top scorer Eric Wynalda, defeated Guatemala 3-0.

If the Brazilians had won the final it would have set up a home-and-away playoff between Mexico and the United States to decide the champions of CONCACAF, sinice Brazil had been invited to play in the Gold Cup and are not members of CONCACAF, the umbrella soccer federation for North and Central America and the Caribbean.

Mexico, coached by ex-U.S. coach Bora Milutinovic and playing in front of a partisan sell-out crowd of 88,155, dominated against a team that had scored 10 goals in its first three matches in the tournament. Brazil's precocious young forwards, Caio and Savio, were kept in check by the tough Mexican defence.

The only real chance of the first half came after just two minutes when Mexico's Blanco broke through and forced Brazilian goalkeeper Dida to dive at full-stretch to turn his fierce low drive around the post.

Ten minutes into the second half, Mexico went ahead when a corner was headed out to Raul Rodrigo Lara, who headed the ball back into the area. Garcia, with his back to goal, controlled the ball, swivelled and half-volleyed high past Dida in the blink of an eye.

In the 75th minute, Mexico sealed the game, when Alberto Garcia Aspe played a through ball with the outside of his foot into the area, where Blanco ran on and buried a low right-foot shot past Dida.

In the match between the losing semi-finalists, the Americans, who lost disappointingly to Brazil 1-0 on Friday, were made to work for their victory by a dogged Guatemala, who had lost 1-0 to Mexico on Friday.

It was not until three minutes from the end, that the Americans could breathe easily, when Manchester United's Jovan Kirovski coolly sidefooted home after running onto a Claudio Reyna pass that split the defence.

The U.S. scored twice in the first half after Gautemala twice had chances to go ahead in a driving rain. Wynalda scored with a downward header from a Reyna cross 34th minute the goal was his 22nd and gave Wynalda the all-time record for goals for the U.S. national team.

Three minutes later, Cobi Jones broke on the right, his cross was back-heeled out and defender Jeff Agoos was on the spot to power home from 25 yards.

Atletico lose but top standings; Baggio secures win for Milan

PARIS (AFP) — Jorge Valdano, who basked in glory when he led Real Madrid to the Spanish title last season, found that memories can be short when things start to go wrong.

The former club player and Argentinian international was unceremoniously sacked when his side slumped to a humiliating 2-1 home league defeat against lowly Rayo Vallecano on Sunday.

Knocked out of the Spanish Cup in mid-week by Espanyol and currently down in eighth place in the league table after winning just nine of 22 games, Real are a massive 16 points behind leaders and bitter rivals Atletico.

Valdano took over the legendary six-times European Cup winners barely 18 months ago after arriving from Tenerife.

Real face a tough European cup quarter-final showdown against Italian champions Juventus in March, and unless there is a marked return to form they could well find themselves without a place in any of the Europe competition next season.

Valdano will be replaced on a temporary basis by Vicente del Bosque — but former Deportivo coach Arsenio Inglesias and ex-Real player Jose Antonio Camacho, currently in charge of high-flying Espanyol, are both being tipped for the post.

"This is a sad day. We had hoped to make a comeback at the end of the season," said Valdano.

But Real president Lorenzo Sanz said: "We've touched rock bottom. There comes a moment when you can't defend someone any more."

Atletico remain six points clear on top of the division despite going down to a surprise 1-0 defeat at Real Sociedad where Oscar De Paula scored the winner midway through the first-half.

Second-placed Compostela squandered a chance to make up ground when they managed only a 1-1 home draw against Celta Vigo, but Barcelona snatched a 1-0 victory in front of their home fans against tailenders Valladolid.

Espanyol slipped to fourth after being held 2-2 at Salamanca while Argentina's Juan Antonio Pizzi managed the goalscoring exploit of the weekend, hitting all four in Tenerife's 4-2 win over Seville.

In Italy, AC Milan preserved their one point lead over Fiorentina thanks to a Roberto Baggio penalty which secured a 1-0 win over lowly Padova.

Fiorentina kept up the pressure, however, with a 3-0 win away to Torino — Argentinian striker Gabriel Batistuta hitting two of their goals and Francesco Baiano notching the other.

Third-placed Parma remained in contention with a 2-0 win over visiting Atlanta — Gabriele Pin and Alessandro Melli doing the damage with goals just before half-time.

But champions Juventus lost ground when they shared a 3-3 away draw with struggling Cremonese.

Abel Eduardo Balbo was a hat-trick hero as AS Roma consolidated their campaign for a UEFA Cup berth with a 3-1 win at home to Sampdoria, who slid into the bottom half of the table but Inter Milan could manage only a 1-1 draw at Vicenza after conceding a last-gap equaliser. Roy Hodgson's men now stand eighth.

Paris St. German saw their lead cut to four points in France after they managed only a 1-1 draw with Le Havre after conceding a last-minute goal ftom a ftee-kick just outside the area.

Metz took full advantage. They moved two points closer by beating Strasbourg 2-1 — their goals coming from Cyrille Pouget and Samba N'Diaye.

Lens slipped to fourth spot after being held 0-0 by Nice making room for Auxerre to return to third. Auxxerre beat Cannes 1-0 — Lidian Laslandes scoring the only goal of the match.

Reigning champions Nantes suffered a humiliating 2-1 home defeat against relegation strugglers Lille and lost international striker Nicolas Ouedec for at least one month with a knee injury.

In the Netherlands, Ajax, who crashed to their first defeat of the season in the Dutch league seven days earlier when they were beaten 1-0 by Willem II Tilburg, escaped with a 3-3 draw at Sparta Rotterdam.

Ajax had led 2-1 early on but needed a goal from former PSV player Peter Hoekstra with just under half-an-hour to go to earn a point.

The result left the European champions on 53 points, with PSV Eindhoven 3-1 winners at Heerenveen on Friday, on 50. Third-placed Feyenoord way off the pace on 35 points, won 3-0 at Volendam.

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The closing date for submitting bids is 12.00 hours local time Wednesday 28th March 1996.

Sameh Madani
Managing Director

INVITATION TO BID

The Ministry of Education retendering items from the following tenders:

Tender No.	Title	Fees	Financier
(9/94)	Lab. equipment	JD 50	World Bank (3106-Jo)
(14/94)	Audio Visual Aids	JD 50	OECF (Jo - P8)

Interested bidders are invited to collect tenders documents from Furniture & Equipment Division (MOE).
- Sterting from Sunday Jan. 21, 1996 against the payment of the above fees.
- Closing date Wednesday March 6, 1996, 11.00 a.m.

Head of Special Tendering Committee

PALESTINIAN LEGISLATURE: Two Palestinian soldiers stand guard in front of the Palestinian legislative council building in Gaza City. The building, which was built in 1958 when Gaza was under Egyptian control, expected to house the newly-elected Palestinian council in Saturday's elections (AFP photo)

Arafat secures a powerful mandate for peace strategy

GAZA CITY (AFP) — Palestinians woke Monday a giant step closer to independence with their first elected government firmly in the hands of President Yasser Arafat and his supporters.

Historic Palestinian elections Saturday handed Mr. Arafat a powerful mandate for his staged strategy for achieving independent statehood, giving the veteran Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) leader nearly 90 per cent of the presidential vote and his supporters three-quarters of the seats in a self-rule legislture.

Final results from the vote for the 88-member Palestinian council were due to be announced later Monday, but with most of the races decided candidates running from Mr. Arafat's Fateh movement and allied independents held about 75 per cent of the seats.

Mahmoud Abbas, head of the official election commission and a leading figure in negotiations with Israel which led to Saturday's vote, declared late Sunday that "the council which was elected has brought us five minutes from independence."

He said the newly elected council, due to govern Palestinian territories on the West Bank and Gaza Strip during an interim three-year period, "will declare independence during its term."

Such statements are a red flag for Israeli conservatives and won banner headlines in the Israeli press.

Prime Minister Shimon Peres, the architect of the autonomy accords with Mr. Arafat, moved quickly to set the Palestinian optimism in context.

"We are at the origins of the Oslo process (for autonomy). It is a choice which we freely made and the process has its limits," he said.

But some of his ministers were not so circumspect.

"The elections have created a new political reality with the emergence of a de facto Palestinian state," said Environment Minister Yossi Sarid, a committed dove.

"I don't know of any example in history where elections took place in a relatively democratic manner to choose a president and a parliament without this rapidly resulting in the creation of a sovereign state," he told Israel Radio Monday.

Saturday's election was widely seen as a major vote of confidence in Mr. Arafat's peace strategy, with a voter turnout of more than 80 per cent showing a clear popular rejection of boycott calls by opponents of the peace process.

A coalition of 650 foreign election observers declared the vote fair, saying the election results "can reasonably be regarded as an accurate expression of the will of the voters on polling day" — despite isolated irregularities.

At least nine of 10 members of Mr. Arafat's outgoing Palestinian National Authority (PNA) cabinet who sought election to the self-rule council won their seats, led by Nabil Shaath and Ahmad Qouirea, key architects of the autonomy accords with Israel.

With preliminary results for 79 of the 88 seats available early Monday, 50 were won by candidates running on the official Fateh slate and two from the allied Fida party.

Twenty-four seats were won by independents, but more than half of these were either Fateh members running alongside the official party slate or Fateh sympathisers.

The independents also included at least two militants close to the Islamic movement Hamas, which officially boycotted the polls.

Leading independents who are expected to form a kernel of opposition in the legislature included Haidar Abdul Shafi, former chief Palestinian negotiator with Israel who broke with Mr. Arafat to protest what he saw as too many concessions being made in autonomy talks with the Jewish state.

Tehran puts 'spies' on trial in public

TEHRAN (AFP) — Six Iranians including a former Jew went on public trial at a revolutionary court on Monday accused of setting up a large spy network which plotted to overthrow Iran's Islamic regime.

It was the first open trial to be staged here for alleged spies.

The six, all former military officers or businessmen, are accused of forming a network during the 1980-1988 war against Iraq to defraud the country's nationalised banking system, traffic arms and spy for Israel and the United States.

They are also accused of working to restore Iran's imperial regime, toppled in the 1979 Islamic revolution.

The suspects are Hedayatollah Zendehdel, a Jewish businessman who converted to Islam, Freidun Abu Zia, an interpreter, Abdolreza Yazdanshenas, former air force officer, Ali Sadafian, former member of the imperial guard, Abdolghassem Majd-Abkani, an alleged associate of the late shah, and businessman Abdolghafur Sartipi.

Under a law existing in Iran since the revolution, the six, arrested six years ago, could face the death penalty.

According to the court, some 150 people were directly or indirectly involved with the network with 110 of them having already arrested and questioned in the case.

Based on the charges read for two hours at the beginning of the trial, the six, introduced as the "core" of the ring, were in contact with "anti-revolutionary groups," notably associates of the former royal family.

They sought to "topple" the regime by "disrupting the country's economic life," or "through armed action if the first method failed."

The men are also accused of having collected classified military information and forwarding them to foreign countries, notably the United States.

They also tried to smuggle in arms through the southern port of Chah Bahar, on the Gulf of Oman, and provide them to "anti-revolutionaries" for armed action against the government.

Opposition in W.Bank, Gaza urge leaders to return home

From Lamis Andoni in East Jerusalem

LEADERS OF the secular opposition in the West Bank urged the Damascus-based leadership of the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine (DFLP) and the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) to come to the Palestinian autonomous areas or risk losing support.

Dr. Riyadh Al Malki of the PFLP and Dr. Mohammad Jadallah of the DFLP told the Jordan Times in separate interviews that it would be the end for the two groups if the Damascus leadership makes "another wrong" decision by refusing to return to the West Bank and Gaza as part of an Israel's offer to allow members of the Palestinian National Council (PNC) to return.

"Palestinians in the occupied territories will not understand the decision of the leaders of the two fronts not to come. The ordinary Palestinian will consider such a decision tantamount to reluctance to shoulder the responsibility of defending the Palestinian national rights," said Dr. Malki, who defied the PFLP's call for boycotting Saturday's Palestinian elections.

"Regardless of (Israeli) motivations and goals it is an opportunity that should not be missed. It is an opportunity that allows the return (of the leadership) to the homeland and to continue the political struggle against all attempts to liquidate the Palestinians including the Palestinian right to return," said Dr. Jadallah.

The PFLP and the DFLP leaderships have rejected the Israeli offer, which was made upon the request of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA). Israel wants the PNC members to return in order to convene a session of the council and revoke articles in the Palestinian charter that calls for the establishment of secular Palestinian state in all of Palestine — an article that Israel considers to be tantamount to its destruction.

But Dr. Malki and Dr. Jadallah believe that the opposition leaders in exile will be totally marginalised and eventually replaced by new movements if they keep on taking decisions that isolate them from their people.

The two most prominent representatives of the PFLP and DFLP in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip said that they accept the outcome of the legislative council elections even though they object to the terms of the Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

"We respect our people's will. I believe that the high turnout was an expression that our people want to take part in the decision-making," said Dr. Jadallah, who argued that the results should be respected even if there had been "interferences here and there" to ensure the success of some of the candidates.

Although Dr. Malki and Dr. Jadallah say that they have not changed their opposition to the Israeli-Palestinian agreements, they believe that the opposition should reassess its strategy, and come out with a new plan of action.

In Dr. Malki's view, by boycotting the elections the opposition has committed a serious blunder that further alienated the opposition groups. Dr. Malki and Dr. Jadallah obeyed the Damascus leaderships' instructions not to run in the elections, but they believe that there was a chance for the opposition to make reasonable gains. The high votes for Dr. Haidar Abdul Shafi, Jawad Abdul Saleh and Dr. Hanan Ashrawi were seen as an indicator that critics of Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's policies could have secured a tangible presence in the legislative council.

Several young leaders of the DFLP and PFLP have criticised their leadership's determination to stay away from the political process so as not give legitimacy to the Israeli-Palestinian agreements.

But the results of the elections, however, have deepened the gap between the Damascus-based leadership and the leadership inside the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.

"By moving to the inside (the West Bank and the Gaza Strip) the leaderships of the two fronts will be consistent with its assessment that the centre of the Palestinian decision-making should move to the inside. If the leadership of the two fronts decide otherwise people will think that the leadership is shunning its responsibilities," Dr. Malki said.

According to Dr. Jadallah, it is time for PNC members and opposition leaders to seize the opportunity and join their people on the ground to continue the struggle. "PNC members could still reject and resist the terms of the agreements and join the people's fold in the direct struggle," Dr. Jadallah said.

International envoys discuss Bosnia, PoWs

SARAJEVO (R) — U.S. human rights envoy John Shattuck headed back to Sarajevo after a tour of sites of alleged war atrocities, saying he would now work to win the release of prisoners held in breach of the Bosnia peace plan.

In a sign of mounting pressure for investigations into war crimes, now that NATO-led peacekeepers have achieved their first goal of parting the combatants, international war crimes prosecutor Richard Goldstone also arrived in Sarajevo for high-level talks.

Mr. Shattuck said after spending the night in Belgrade his new priority was the fate of hundreds of prisoners of war still held by all three sides in the conflict, despite a Jan. 19 deadline for their release under the Dayton peace plan.

"In Sarajevo I will be meeting officials and continuing to pursue very hard the release of prisoners. All prisoners who've been visited by the ICRC (International Committee of the Red Cross) should be released," Mr. Shattuck told journalists.

The U.S. assistant secretary of state made a groundbreaking visit on Sunday to the sites of alleged graves of thousands of victims of massacres after the fall of the Muslim enclave Srebrenica in eastern Bosnia last July.

He told reporters at the sites there was overwhelming evidence of "horrible crimes against humanity."

"Ultimately justice and long-term peace must go together," he said. "We cannot hope to see an end to this terrible conflict until the facts are known about what occurred and justice is done... that's the moral imperative."

Mr. Shattuck saw spattered blood and holes in the walls of a warehouse. Survivors say grenades were fired at the building, killing a large number of the people held inside.

He also inspected a schoolhouse and gymnasium where, according to reports by survivors, people were held before being taken out in groups of 30 into woods nearby and shot.

He added: "We believe that up to 7,000 people are missing from the capture of Srebrenica. I'm afraid their fate could well be very clear from the mass graves and mass executions we've heard about in the area."

Mr. Shattuck visited the devastated village of Glogova, 16 kilometres northwest of Srebrenica, where he said 2,000 people were believed buried.

A Reuters reporter saw a human bone, with flesh and rags attached, protruding from a suspected mass grave nearby.

The Bosnian Serb "interior minister" Dragan Kijac, whose police escorted Mr. Shattuck to the sites," said later that his trip proved nothing about alleged war crimes.

Mr. Shattuck said he was keen to provide momentum for investigations by the Bosnia war crimes tribunal, headed by Mr. Goldstone. "Security will be needed for grave investigations and IFOR has a duty... to provide assistance to war crimes investigators," he said.

Commanders of the NATO-led Implementation Force in Bosnia (IFOR) have been quick to deny reports that their troops will guard the sites of mass graves pending investigations.

"We've seen statements made by Assistant Secretary Shattuck over the past 12 hours. Please understand these are statements representing the view of an individual who is outside IFOR," IFOR spokesman Mark Rayner said in Sarajevo on Monday.

Mr. Shattuck said in Belgrade on Monday he had "no differences of opinion with IFOR."

Allegations of mass killings form the basis of war crimes indictments issued by a U.N. tribunal against the Bosnian Serb "president," Radovan Karadzic, and army commander Ratko Mladic.

Judge Goldstone was scheduled to meet IFOR commander Admiral Leighton Smith, ground forces commander General Michael Walker and Ejup Ganic, a member of the Bosnian presidency.

Some 220 registered prisoners were freed on Friday. But hundreds more are still being held by Muslim, Croat and Serb authorities despite the requirement of the Dayton peace agreement that they be released unconditionally.

The military timetable of the peace plan is proceeding more successfully, with most forces having withdrawn on schedule by two kilometres from their ceasefire line to create a "zone of separation" which will be policed by the peacekeepers.

U.S. backs Egypt in dispute with Sudan

CAIRO (Agencies) — The United States backs Egypt in its dispute with Sudan, which is accused of supporting terrorism, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Madeleine Albright said here on Monday.

"Sudan is an issue that we want to be supportive on and we are very concerned by what has happened," Ms. Albright told journalists after meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak.

"We discussed with the president the whole issue of Sudan and the assassination attempt on him" in Addis Ababa last June which Egypt and Ethiopia accuse Khartoum of backing, Ms. Albright said.

"We are very concerned about that event itself and the whole issue of the spread of terrorism. (But) at this stage, we are just looking at all the various options. This is a process," she said.

Sudan has been on the U.S. State Department's list of countries supporting terrorism since 1993.

Egypt, which just took a seat on the Security Council, and the five other non-aligned members have put forward a resolution to force Khartoum to extradite to Ethiopia three militants suspected in the bid to kill Mr. Mubarak.

The council will begin discussing the resolution after Jan. 29, according to diplomats.

Relations between Egypt and Sudan have taken a nosedive since the assassination attempt and Cairo has repeatedly accused Khartoum of backing Egyptian militants seeking to topple Mr. Mubarak.

Ms. Albright, who arrived in Egypt late Sunday on the last leg of a tour of Africa, said she and Mr. Mubarak reviewed "the work of the U.N. Security Council, and Egypt's important role as a new member of the council."

"We are going to be working very closely following Egypt's lead on a whole set of issues before the Security Council," she said.

The ambassador underlined the need for peacekeeping operations in Africa and the need to reform the U.N. and Iraq.

"We are not for dividing Iraq, we believe that it needs to be one country," she said. But "Saddam Hussein's regime has to respect the rights of the Kurds in the north and the Shiites who live in the south."

Ms. Albright was to meet late Monday with Foreign Minister Amr Musa before leaving the next morning for the United States.

Eritrea's President Isayas Afewerki was quoted on Monday as saying he would give militarily support to all Sudanese groups seeking to topple the government of President Omar Hassan Al Bashir.

"If the policy of the Sudanese regime is to use force against us then it is not strange or shameful for us to defend ourselves by all means," Mr. Afewerki told the London-based Al Hayat Arabic daily.

"We have absolutely no ties with this regime and our relations with the opposition are well known. If they ask us to support them militarily or through training or with arms, we will not hesitate to fulfil their demands," he added.

Eritrea broke relations with Sudan in December 1994 on suspicion that Khartoum was supporting a subversive Eritrean Islamic movement.

Hassan Abu Ghanimeh

Al Ra'i art critic passes away

AMMAN (J.T.) — Hassan Abu Ghanimeh, a columnist and art and movie critic with the Al Ra'i daily, died Monday of a heart attack. He was 48.

Born in Irbid in 1948, Mr. Abu Ghanimeh was a well-known movie critic in the past quarter of a century during which he also attended several regional and international cinema festivals. He was recently elected as member of an international committee on cinema history formed by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

Mr. Abu Ghanimeh wrote 20 books on cinema, culture and several biographies, and worked as a journalist for some time, writing for Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian press, but he spent the last 10 years of his life as arts editor for Al Ra'i daily.

Rabin assassin shifts tactics as trial resumes

TEL AVIV (AFP) — The trial of Yigal Amir, the killer of Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, is set to resume on Tuesday with the defence changing tactic and arguing that he never intended to assassinate the premier.

Amir, 25, who gunned down Mr. Rabin at close range after a peace rally in Tel Aviv on Nov. 4, faces life imprisonment if found guilty on charges of predemidated murder of the prime minister and wounding a bodyguard.

However, Israeli legal expert suggested that Amir's lawyers would seek to have the charges reduced to manslaughter and argue that earlier confessions were beaten out of him.

"The defence is going to bring out the latest confession from its client in which he said he aimed at the prime minister's spinal column, intending to paralyse him, and not at this head or heart," said one expert, Yoram Yarkoni.

In a statement published on Jan. 16, Amir told investigators from the state commission of inquiry: "I was not looking to kill Yitzhak Rabin. I did not intend to do it, but only to wound him seriously enough so that he would have to retire from the political scene."

A transcript of the statement, made during an eight-hour interrogation at Beersheba prison in southern Israel, where he is held in solitary confinement, has been submitted as evidence to the Tel Aviv court handling the case.

"If I could have shot the prime minister in the knee and put an end to his political activities I would have done it," he said, according to the transcript broadcast by Israeli television.

Amir, a right-wing law student opposed to the Israeli-Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) peace process, has said at previous court hearings, usually with a smile on his face, that he was acting on the orders of God and was carrying out his sacred duty.

With his brother Hagai, and friend Dror Adani he faces a separate trial for conspiracy.

He continues to express no regrets for his action and has said Mr. Rabin's successor, Shimon Peres, also deserved to die, although he has insisted he had nothing personal against Mr. Rabin as an individual.

"I even stood to attention for you when the siren sounded on the day of Rabin's funeral," he said.

Contrary to earlier confessions, when he admitted trying three times to kill Mr. Rabin, in his last statement he said: "Right up until the last minute, I didn't know if I was going to fire or not. I have killed someone but I am not a liar."

COLUMN

Australian city muzzles killer dogs

CANBERRA (R) — A city council in Australia has imposed tough controls on American pit bull terriers and plans to ban breeding, following a series of fatal dog attacks in Australia. "The dogs are particularly vicious," Jim Soorley, mayor of the Queensland state capital Brisbane, told Australian Broadcasting Corporation Radio Monday. "When they bite, they only let go to get a better bite and you have to have an iron bar to open their jaws. I think that sort of dog is unnecessary in an...urban population." New regulations imposed recently by Mr. Soorley's city council declare pit bulls dangerous, forcing owners to keep their dogs behind special fences and muzzle them in public. A second raft of controls will ban breeding and make desexing compulsory. Pit bulls, some of which are bred for illegal dogfights, are vicious fighters and naturally aggressive, say animal experts. A national law already bans their import.

Tattoo artists make their mark at convention

HOUSTON (R) — The hum of tattoo machines reverberated through a Houston hotel Sunday as 1,500 people tattooed, scarred and pierced each other in an event where the offbeat is normal. The colourful 20th anniversary reunion and tattoo convention brought together tattoo artists and aficionados in an atmosphere that would cheer those who believe the United States is becoming too staid. There was, for example, the young man who calls himself Enigma. His entire body, including his shaved head, has been tattooed with small squares. As he travels, Enigma collects souvenirs by getting local tattoo artists to fill in the squares. He has travelled a lot. Julia Gnuse, a 41-year-old computer saleswoman from California, has a face that is a permanent mardi gras mask, tattooed with swirling birds, flowers and snakes. Sales calls, she said, can be interesting. "When I first go in, some people look at me strangely, but once they see the artwork, they like it," she told Reuters. Business must be good because Ms. Gnuse has spent $30,000 getting tattooed since she started four years ago with a leg tattoo to cover up a skin disorder. The current fad in tattooing is called tribalism. It refers to simple designs that draw from primitive cultures. Among the younger crowd, satanic tattoos are big, artists say.

Burglar snores his way into police lock-up

KUALA LUMPUR (AFP) — A Malaysian burglar, exhausted after breaking into an office on the outskirts of Kuala Lumpur, fell asleep on the job ... and snored his way into police lock-up, reports said Sunday. The 22-year-old professional locksmith was exhausted after cutting through iron grilles to enter the office block in the suburb of Petaling Jaya and fell asleep by a safe, police said. "Unfortunately, he overslept, and an employee found him snoring away beside a safe," district Deputy Police Chief Reduan Aslie was quoted saying by the Sunday Times. The worker called police immediately and the slumbering thief was caught.